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Local Spotlight

FIRES IN KUWAIT



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The series of fires in Kuwait do not seem to end, and hardly a week passes without reports of fires making headlines, especially if the damage is severe and innocent lives are lost. This raises a question about the causes of fires and what should be done to avoid negative effects on the environment and people's health. Sometimes, the reasons for the blazes are either incomprehensible or not announced to the public - like the repeated fires at the Shadadiya university site or the tire dump.

The people of Kuwait have been puzzled and haven't found an answer since 2013, when the first fire broke out at the university site, followed by five other blazes. Despite the formation of several investigation committees, the probes into each of the six fires did not result in a satisfactory conclusion - other than blaming cigarettes! Of course there are rumors and people talk about the beneficiaries, but nothing official has been done to punish the culprits. It's unfortunate. In 2009, one of the worst humanitarian disasters occurred in Kuwait - the "funeral wedding" blaze in Jahra, in which 58 women and children were killed, in addition to dozens injured. The suspect was sentenced to death by hanging and was executed this year.

No one can deny the efforts of the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate - it is in a state of constant alert, and its personnel are exposed to great risk. Controlling fires is a shared duty of everyone.

The KFSM reports that at least one intentional fire breaks out daily in the country. Statistics reveal that 409 deliberate fires occurred in 2016, an average of 1.1 fires every day. According to statistics, Jahra was at the forefront of arson incidents, with 150 fires, followed by Farwaniya with 96, Ahmadi 95, Capital 25, Hawally with 24 and finally Mubarak Al-Kabeer.

These are large numbers for a small country and finding the reasons is essential. The responsibility lies not only on government bodies such as the fire department, but also on the members of the society. Safety is a responsibility and a partnership among all, especially since there have been a number of fires in which young children have lost their lives due to the negligence of the parents or lack of attention to security and safety conditions in the house or pool.

A fire broke out at the new opera house in the capital in February, but the causes are unknown to all. A few days ago, a fire broke out at the Credit Bank in South Surra. Officials have called for an investigation into the causes of the blaze. The question here is how long it will take until everyone knows the causes of the fire and if the criminals will be punished.

Official reports indicate that most fires are caused by electric short circuits, followed by children messing with thermal sources, flammable materials, throwing lighted cigarette butts, excessive electric loads, putting a heat source near flammable materials and finally forgetting about utensils on the stove.

I believe that the series of fires will not stop and it is very important that these incidents are reviewed by strict investigation committees to hold perpetrators accountable through legal channels.

Public awareness is very important, especially for domestic helpers, who have to be informed about the best ways to handle electric appliances. Smokers have to be warned that throwing a lighted cigarette butt can cause a great fire. All storage companies shouldn't neglect security and safety conditions and non-compliant companies should be punished. This is a shared duty of all.

IN MY VIEW

THAT FEAR SHOULD 'NOT' BE THERE



By Ramona Crasto

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I got the habit of saying 'that fear should be there' from a friend of mine and I realized that after a while when you constantly use a phrase it turns into a catchphrase and when people around you listen to it, they start using it and the circle continues. Have you ever given this a thought, since childhood we all know that one person we are scared of or dislike. Reason? Don't know, we just don't like that person on the basis of what we have heard or what they have done to others and this becomes a kind of catchphrase that we end up doing and we also spread the word, why others should stay away from that person, without a legit reason.

So many people belonging from one country dislike people from another country without any logical reason or maybe because what their father's father's father must have done years ago. We are taught at school and home of how that person from that particular country is bad, is a terrorist or a robber or poor or rich because he belongs to that country. Stereotyping people has always been an issue for both assailant and victim. Assailants are also taught at home or school or from their surroundings the reason to hate people or why it is okay to do bad to people, because their ancestors did something to us a long time ago.

We can all agree that when a foreigner looks at an Indian we simply decide that he/she is poor and comes from some village. When a foreigner roams on the streets of India people assume they are very rich and give them a star struck feel by clicking pictures with them. Turns out that Indian you judged

earns double your income and that foreigner has saved as much money as anyone else to make this trip to India affordable for their family.

When did we turn out to be so judgmental? Just because a country has rape cases, doesn't make everyone a rapist. Just because some foolish people from a country slaughtered innocent people, doesn't make everyone a terrorist. Just because once upon a time, their ancestor looted your country, doesn't make this man a robber. Just because someone did something 100 years ago doesn't mean they don't deserve forgiveness.

Maybe some acts cannot be forgiven but will this world be a better place if we don't? Why is there so much hatred? I don't know. Hatred spreads faster than love. Just because someone belongs from a country struck by war doesn't mean we leave them to their fate. What have we turned into? Zombies, already? We are humans, the first thing you should teach your child is the reason behind what and why you do it.

Hating or disliking someone has become a catchphrase and not a good one.

It is not okay or right to kill or take away someone's life or harm anyone physically or mentally for that matter. Maybe that person did something really wrong to you but if you do the same, what makes you any different than him/her? There are ways to deal with things and I'm very sure violence isn't one of them. Judging people isn't one of them. We need to learn to forgive.

We need to stop stereotyping everything and everyone. We need to have better conscious of what we are doing and what is the reason behind it. We need to stand up for the sake of love and truth, because we care and it's humane to be kind no matter how harsh the world is. That fear to stand up and question what's right and wrong shouldn't be there. Change starts small; it starts from you and what you teach the future generation. 'That fear should not be there'.

In my view

CHILDHOOD DISCRIMINATION

By Sana Kalim

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There is an issue that must be addressed. For too long, this sector of our society has remained silent, unheard of. I am talking about people who have dreams, just like you me. They are passionate and pure - they just have to do it in their own way. The world was not cut out for them as cleanly as ours. We are selfish to think that our lives are difficult. What about theirs?

I am talking about people who have a different neurological pathway: Autism. Down syndrome. Slow learners. Deaf. Blind. Mute. And those with many more 'problems'. I am talking to those who day in and day out suffer, and yet, as eloquently as I can put it, take it as normal. No, this is not normal.

When we are young, our parents slaved away to clear out any and every problem we had. It's great, but have you seen the suffering they have to go through to ensure that they can do everything they can? Caged up in a choking white office with the A/C throbbing and giving up faced with the relentless summer heat for nine hours or more - you might have thought that they didn't love you when you were younger. Did they prefer having a job more than you? And then you realize how powerful a single green-tinged sheet of paper can be, and how hard you have to work just to earn a fraction of it.

Now think how hard the parents have had to work to support the children, beautiful and innocent, who have been given a different mindset? Think of the extra costs of speech therapy, ASL courses, tutors, lessons... Think of all the time the parents missed out during the child's youth - not knowing how to help them, and so paying experts to help their child.

From personal experience, I attended a meeting which discussed this issue. The atmosphere was striking in the humid room - the parents appeared calm and collected, despite (as Mutairi put it) 1.5 to 2 percent of every 100 Kuwaiti children have autism. But in Kuwait, expat parents face additional hardships. The special schools denied them admission because they weren't Kuwaiti, and services were really expensive as well. And the pitiful bickering continued.

However, this is not the matter of being a Kuwaiti... it's about a child. How hard is it to help a child, expat or not?! How can we be denied of such rights? Why is this a business? It should not be this difficult. This is just immoral, no matter how you try to bend the truth. Because at the end, denying a child with dreams and hopes is no different from murder.

Now, what about schools? Well, we are a community, a society. We should not be segregated. So please just bring down the barriers between 'us' and 'them'. We are a single entity - sure, these children may require more time with their tutors, but please, lower the barrier.

Dear brothers and sisters, I know I have gone quite harsh on this, and frankly I wanted to add more - a lot more. However I felt this article should portray the passion so that this issue can be highlighted. To parents - I know it is difficult, but I urge you not to lose hope. Your children will blossom, and they will be the most beautiful of all. However, it's not like I thought that you would ever give up - you are strong - and God has gifted this to you, because he knows that you are most deserving.



Pet market open despite heat



By Ben Garcia

Amidst the searing heat, Kuwait Times visited the infamous pet market in Rai near the Friday Market.

Recently, some social media have reported that pets are being abandoned in droves by people leaving Kuwait for the summer. There have also been unconfirmed reports that the pet market itself has been shuttered.

Kuwait Times found that the pet market is still open and operating as normal, with hundreds of animals left to suffer in the unbearable heat.

"No, the municipality did not shutter shops at the pet market. We are open from 8am to 10pm. People even come in the middle of the day to purchase pets and

food," confirmed Binal, an Indian working at one of the pet shops.

Regarding abandoned pets, no statistics or government data is available, but individual accounts suggest that there has been an uptick in abandoned pets dumped in the streets, local parks or near the market.

The ill treatment of some animals in the market continues. Many shops aren't airconditioned and animals are kept in tiny cages, quite often in unhygienic conditions. During our recent visit, Kuwait Times saw a man dousing a cat with hot water directly from the tap and using dishwashing liquid as cleaner.

At a bird shop, an attendant was spraying water on pigeons and other birds using a spray bottle, a friendlier way of giving them a bath.



Animals are kept in tiny cages, often for days and weeks at a time outdoors or in shops without proper ventilation or air conditioning at the pet market in Al-Rai, Kuwait.

— Photos by Ben Garcia

Kuwait's first manga writer



An interview with Shinigami Sensei author **Hisham Najem**

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Japanese manga and anime have a wide following in Kuwait and the region. One young Kuwaiti writer however has taken his interest in the popular graphic storytelling to a personal level by writing his own manga series, Shinigami Sensei. Published in a series format twice weekly online, Shinigami Sensei combines 27-year old Kuwaiti writer Hisham Najem's storyline with Indonesian-based artist Hanna Philip's drawings for a unique and distinctly 'Japanese' manga narrative.

Manga writer Hisham Najem
—Photo by Athoob Al-Shuaibi/Kuwait Times

The narrative unfolds around a 'good' killer. (Shinigami is Japanese for 'grim reaper' and Sensei means 'teacher'.) No one knows why he is acting like an animal. Is he possessed by demons? Is he on the brink of a human instinct? The manga gives the reader something to think about.

"It was hard to envision how the characters look or sound like. My main character is so good in killing that he killed me! Until today, I don't know what his name is. Throughout the manga comic, you'll discover his name changes. You'll watch him from birth until the present, when he turns 26," Najem told Kuwait Times.

Najem is no manga fanatic and doesn't speak a word of Japanese. "The only reason why I read a manga comic was that I wanted to know the end of an anime show I was watching and couldn't finish it. It's called Bleach. I was 17, and that was the one and only manga comic book I have ever read," he said.

"At that time, the idea of Shinigami Sensei was forming in my head, and had nothing to do with Japan. I didn't have in mind to do a manga comic. It was a completely different type of story. At first, I wanted to prepare it as a movie script because I used to write theatre and advertisement scripts. Later, I realized that I needed to find a different area where I can be original, so I said, 'I'll create a novel'. Then, I remembered that nobody reads novels anymore. So I said - a comic book; then I said why not manga, and what if my character ends up in Japan? Everything started brewing for Shinigami Sensei afterwards."

Nowadays, Najem is working on three manga series - Shinigami Sensei, available online, a comic book called Daizaburo, which will be published soon and Piece by Piece.

"The latest comic that I'm working on is probably the most challenging, because it's more family-friendly. It's called Piece by Piece. It's a slice of life. In this comic, I don't want to feature any cursing or violence at all. The main character is a refugee who washes up onto a Japanese beach. He doesn't believe in violence, and tries to get on with his life peacefully," Najem told Kuwait Times.

Najem defines his knowledge of Japanese culture as above average but far from expert. "I only know what I learn from my friends, movies or anime. But anime is a horrible way to learn about Japanese culture, because it is fantasy. A lot of people think that if you watch anime, you know Japan - you don't. It's a completely different story. You have to understand that they beautify everything. So what happens in anime wouldn't happen in real life," he said.

"Firstly, the Japanese are very conservative, and they don't usually speak about their feelings. Secondly, they are very polite and apolo-





getic, but you don't see this in anime. You see characters that are loud and dynamic. You can see their traditions in anime, but anime is not a judge of their culture, and I'm still learning," Najem added.

Violence, sex and cursing are critical in manga literature, and the Japanese are very strict when it comes to age ratings. "There are strictly adult themes, with a lot of violence and gore. You can't find these anime or manga in Kuwait. Mine is 17+ because of the language. I would never show a sexual scene, but I would imply it. I stay away from nudity

because I would like to bring out something that my mother would be proud of. Nothing is published without my mom's OK!" he asserted.

Shinigami Sensei sold out at the 2017 Dubai Comic Con festival. Najem connects with his fans through his site, www.shinigami-sensei.com, where he publishes a few pages of his manga at regular intervals. "I do not communicate much in real life with fans, nor expose my mind to a lot of manga series, so that I do not end up involuntarily influenced and be imitative," he reasoned.



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HOT WEATHER CONTINUES

KUWAIT: Hot weather will prevail during the weekend in Kuwait with temperatures soaring up to 51 Degrees Celsius, Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, weather forecaster at Kuwait Meteorological Center said yesterday.

Speaking to KUNA, Al-Qarawi said that today's weather will be very hot with moderate to fresh northwesterly wind at the speed of 20-40 kph during the day. During the evening, there will be moderate north-

westerly wind with the speed of 12-32 kph. Al-Qarawi added that the minimum and maximum temperatures will be at 32 to 49 degrees Celsius respectively. Tomorrow's minimum and maximum temperatures

would be 31 and 49 degrees Celsius respectively. The weather will be hot with wind speed of 6-22 kph. The status of the sea will be normal with waves reaching 1 to 2 feet. —KUNA

CRIMINAL GANG BUSTED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives busted a criminal gang network. Detective received a tip from a source about their activities near a farm in Wafra. The farm was raided and six Kuwaitis and two Gulf nationals were arrested. Items that were reported stolen before were found in their possession, along with drugs and paraphernalia. They were all sent to concerned authorities for further legal action.

Truck driver injured

A truck driver was injured when his trailer flipped over between Siddiq and Zahra areas. He was rushed to hospital.



KUWAIT WINS 2-YEAR IOC-UNESCO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

PARIS: Kuwait has won a two-year membership in the executive council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (IOC-UNESCO) during the 29th Session of IOC Assembly, which kicked off on June 21. Electing Kuwait as a member in the IOC-UNESCO's executive council is in international appreciation and recognition of its pioneering role in Oceanography, Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO said. The Kuwaiti scientific institutes, most notably Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS), have contributed significantly in bolstering national and regional capabilities in preserving and protecting environments and marine habitats, Hayat added.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti diplomat affirmed, in his speech at the session, his country's keenness on strengthening the potentials of marine science programs on regional and international levels. Recently, Kuwait has

hosted two international meetings on Oceanography with participation of several experts from around the world, Hayat pointed out. The two events discussed regional cooperation in facing hazards endangering the Central Indian Ocean region such as increase in acidity, in addition to boosting risk control systems in facing disasters threatening marine areas such as cyclones and tsunamis.

Established in 1960, IOC is a body with functional autonomy within UNESCO and the only competent organization for marine science within the UN system, according to IOC-UNESCO's website. The Commission promotes international cooperation and coordinates programs in research, services, and capacity-building in order to learn more about nature and resources of the ocean and coastal areas. It also applies that knowledge for the improvement of management, sustainable development, protection of the marine environment, and the decision-making processes of its member-states. — KUNA

BOURSA KUWAIT BENCHMARK IN MARGINAL FALL

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait concluded its weekly trades yesterday with slight drop by the benchmark after making up for a large part of the losses it incurred earlier in today's session, settling at 6,762 points. Trades focused on some groups' stocks, namely Al-Madina, as well as those enlisted under umbrella of the key index, Kuwait-15. Some traders focused on banking shares, as well those of Agility and Zain. Others opted to delay purchasing till

next week to get a clear picture of the trades, thus causing liquidity decline. Moreover, a number of key traders were absent due to the vacation.

Nevertheless, trades are expected to pick up next week to target blue-chips in particular. Some traders inquired about "exposures" sustained by the Kuwaiti Al-Ahli Bank's Qatar branch, with a total of \$184.2 million. Boursa Kuwait, formerly known as Kuwait Stock

Exchange (KSE), ended yesterday's trading with the benchmark going down by 6.24 points to 6,762 points. The Weighted and KSX 15 indices also went down by 2.82 and 10.16 points respectively. Number of trades was at 1,886 with the value of shares reaching KD 6.7 million, and the volume amounting 34.7 million shares. Meanwhile, the price of Kuwaiti oil barrel rose 24 cents to reach \$43.11 per barrel on Wednesday, compared with \$42.87 pb on

Tuesday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. Oil prices in international markets went up yesterday as buyers were encouraged by a drop in US crude production, shrugging off an unexpected rise in US crude stocks to 118,000 barrels last week. The Brent crude oil rose 66 cents reaching \$47.31 per barrel upon settlement and West Texas Intermediate went up 50 cents to reach \$44.74 pb. —Agencies

Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Photo captures the sunset in Kuwait. Kuwait residents are braving the blazing sun amid a heat wave that has raised temperatures to unprecedented levels. A recent international report identified Kuwait as one of the hottest spot on earth this year. — KUNA

'TOGETHER' EDUCATES MIGRANTS ON RIGHTS

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Society for Human Rights launched an application called 'Together' last month. The initiative, which is first of its kind in Kuwait and the GCC is aimed at educating migrant workers about their legal rights in Kuwait. This application includes awareness information, pictures and graphics in five languages. Also, there is a hotline, website, and a mobile phone application to respond to any form of maltreatment.

This application was launched after the Kuwait Society for Human Rights carried out the 'Ma'an' (Together) project - educating migrant workers about their rights in Kuwait in cooperation with the Embassy of Netherlands. This project is to mitigate the violations against migrant workers who are ignorant of their rights. According to Mohammed Al-Otaibi, a member of the Board

of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, this application educates the expat workers about their rights that are embedded in local laws and international treaties. It also provides legal consultation for these workers in their language in order to protect them.

The application provides various services - including asking about different legal issues through the hotline or direct question on the website. It also allows the workers to file complaints after registering for an account. The application is confidential. It contains the map, numbers and addresses of the embassies along with the person in charge who deals with the violations. Furthermore, the application also includes directory of the organizations and embassies in addition to their contacts. Also it provides information about the procedure of calling for help and the kind of help provided by these institutions.

CHARRED BODY FOUND

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives are investigating the case of charred body of a citizen whose body was found near his car. Police received a call about the body behind Nuwaiseeb gas station. The body of the young man was found 200 meters away from his car. Detectives are investigating whether it is a murder case. In another development, detectives and forensics are investigating the death of a Gulf national whose body was found in Salmi desert. Illicit drug 'chemical' was also found in his possession. Farm guards informed the police about the body.

who stole the car of an Indian man. The Indian sought the help of police after he was attacked by thieves who claimed to be police officers.

Husband dupes wife

A Kuwaiti took KD 20,000 from his wife to buy a chalet in Khairan area, but he instead rented a flat in Nugra area where he housed his Asian girlfriends. The woman suspected something fishy and then decided to follow her husband to a building in Nugra. She asked the 'haris' about her husband, and learned that he rented an apartment there where he spends time with his Asian lovers. The husband later confessed.—Al Rai

Fake police officers

Detectives are looking for three persons

MAIL HANDLERS ON STRIKE

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The employees handling the mail boxes at Salmiya Post Office went on strike yesterday over unpaid salaries. According to the director of the post office, the employees decided to go on strike because they didn't receive their salaries for the past three months. Although the post offices in Kuwait are run by the government, under the Ministry of Communications, some mail services are done by private companies. Kuwait Times reported earlier this year the bad situation of the post office, which affects its services.





ABU SAMRAH, Qatar : A general view of the Qatari side of the Abu Samrah border crossing with Saudi Arabia. On June 5, Saudi Arabia and its allies cut all diplomatic ties with Qatar, pulling their ambassadors from the gas-rich emirate and giving its citizens a two-week deadline to leave their territory. The measures also included closing Qatar's only land border, banning its planes from using their airspace and barring Qatari nationals from transiting through their airports. — AFP

DUBAI RULER TAKES TO VERSE, URGING QATAR TO TURNABOUT

USING POETRY TO CONVEY A MESSAGE

DUBAI: The ruler of Dubai has taken to verse to urge Qatar to concede to the demands of Saudi Arabia and its allies for an end to a crippling embargo. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, who is also vice president and prime minister of the United Arab Emirates, is the latest in a long line of world leaders to turn poetry to convey their message. In the poem, posted on Instagram late on Wednesday, Sheikh Mohammed urged Qatar to abandon its independent foreign policy and return to the Gulf fold. "Of one origin, people, existence/one flesh and blood, one land and faith," he wrote.

"Yet Qatar turns to the nearby stranger, to the weak," he added, alluding to Doha's refusal to join the Riyadh-led boycott of Tehran. "Now is the time to unite, one heart/to protect one another beyond hate." The poem garnered more than 80,000 likes overnight. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and its allies Egypt and Bahrain severed all ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of support for extremist groups—a claim Doha denies. They closed their airspace to Qatari carriers and blocked the emirate's only land border, a vital route for its food imports.

They also ordered all Qataris to leave and their own nationals to return home.

Last week, Riyadh laid down a list of 13 "non-negotiable" demands for Doha, including ending its support for the Muslim Brotherhood, the closure of Al-Jazeera television, a downgrade of diplomatic ties with Iran and the shutdown of a Turkish military base in the emirate. The UAE ambassador to Russia Omar Ghobash warned in comments published by Britain's Guardian newspaper on Tuesday that Qatar could face further sanctions if it failed to meet the demands.

Sheikh Mohammed is by no means the first world leader to turn to poetry. Former US president Jimmy Carter is a published poet. Barack Obama dabbled in poetry in the 1980s and his successor Donald Trump is now the unintentional author of a compilation of tweets and quotes entitled "Bard of the Deal: The poetry of Donald Trump". Bosnian Serb psychiatrist-turned-politician Radovan Karadzic, sentenced to 40 years in jail by a UN court last year for his part in the 1995 genocide of Muslims in the town of Srebrenica, also fancied himself as a poet, releasing a collection of poetry and a novel, "Miraculous Chronicles of the Night". —AFP

AMID CRISIS WITH ARAB STATES, QATAR MINISTER VISITS TURKEY

ANKARA: The defense minister of Qatar is to visit its ally Turkey today, state media reported, as Ankara resists pressure to shutter a military base in the emirate's unresolved row with Gulf neighbors. Hamad bin Ali Al-Attiyah will meet with Turkish Defense Minister Fikri Isik at the defense ministry in Ankara, the state-run news agency Anadolu said yesterday. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain announced on June 5 the suspension of political, economic and diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing the emirate of support for extremist groups. Doha denies the claims and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said there is no basis to the allegations and offered Qatar Turkey's support.

Turkey has provided food and other aid via hundreds of planes and a cargo ship, although Ankara's attempts to mediate between the sides have so far come to nothing. Crucially, Ankara is also setting up a military base on the emirate that is set to give Turkey a new foothold in the Gulf. A bill was fast-tracked through the Turkish parliament this month as the crisis broke out giving Ankara a mandate to send up to several thousand troops to the base.

An initial contingent of 23 soldiers and five armored vehicles arrived in Qatar on June 22. Last week Riyadh and its allies issued 13 demands to Qatar, including the shutdown of the Turkish military base, or



DOHA: Ali Bin Smaikh Al-Marri, chairman of Qatar's National Human Rights Commission gives a press conference in Doha. Al-Marri, said his group would take action against Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, employing Swiss lawyers to seek compensation for those impacted by the decision of Gulf countries to cut ties with the emirate. — AFP

face further sanctions. Erdogan hit back at the Saudi-led demands, calling the sweeping demands "against international law" and saying that asking for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Qatar was a "disrespect to Turkey." Yet Ankara has also been careful not to directly criticize Riyadh and previously urged the kingdom to lead attempts to solve the crisis.— AFP

International

FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 2017

Iraqi forces take landmark mosque blown up by IS



Merkel slams Trump ahead of stormy G20



'Coming out' is a family affair for Chinese gays



SEATTLE: In this May 15, 2017 file photo, protesters wave signs and chant during a demonstration against US President Donald Trump's revised travel ban, outside a federal courthouse. —AP

TRUMP TRAVEL BAN TO TAKE PARTIAL EFFECT

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORDER COULD BE CHAOTIC

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's order to block arrivals from six mainly Muslim countries took partial effect yesterday after he won a Supreme Court victory over rights groups. But implementation of the order after five months of legal challenges could be chaotic, in part due to the meaning of a key term used in the court's ruling Monday: "bona fide."

The court said that Trump could only ban travelers from the targeted countries "who lack any bona fide relationship with a person or entity in the United States." With a 72-hour preparation period set before implementing the ban, the ruling has sent lawyers diving into legal texts to define that. They need to set standards for US immigration officials and diplomats in Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, and also at US arrival points, who will decide who from those countries can still enter the United States.

Lawyers and advocates both for and against the travel ban say the result could be a flood of legal challenges by travelers, immigrants and their supporters-

further slowing arrivals from the six countries. Immigrant advocates were preparing for the onset of the ban, saying they would be at airports to aid any arriving travelers that immigration officers seek to send back. The New York Immigration Coalition said yesterday it plans to be at New York's John F Kennedy International Airport, "monitoring the effects of Trump's revised Muslim and refugee ban."

Waiting for a definition

The ruling Monday capped five months of heavily politicized legal scrapping. The highest US court partially reversed lower courts' freezes of Trump's 90 day ban on travelers from the six countries, which he said was necessary to screen out potential terror threats. It also allowed Trump to implement a 120 day ban on all refugees.

The court said it will review the overall case in October, meaning both bans will largely have run their course by then, though they could be extended

if immigrant vetting processes are still judged to be too weak. The refugee ban could be moot much sooner: the Trump administration has cut the number of refugees it will accept annually to 50,000. The State Department said Tuesday that that threshold will be reached within the coming two weeks. But many hopeful non-refugee travelers from the six countries could be affected. The court said only those with a significant or genuine-bona fide — relationship with an American person or group can be admitted during the period of the ban.

That will include, in the court's example, those with close relatives, those admitted to universities, or accepted to a job, to gain entry. But does it extend to someone with distant family, or who has only applied to a university or a job but has not yet received an answer? Conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, who wanted the ban implemented for anyone for the six countries, wrote Monday that he fears the court decision "will prove unworkable."

It "will invite a flood of litigation until this case is finally resolved on the merits, as parties and courts struggle to determine what exactly constitutes a 'bona fide relationship'." Heather Nauert, spokeswoman for the State Department, said they were waiting for Justice Department lawyers to provide guidance on "bona fide."

"We don't have a definition here at the State Department for that yet," she said. "Everybody wants to get this right. They want to see this implemented in an orderly fashion." Homeland Security Department spokesman David Lapan said all three departments were conferring. "Guidance will be provided in time for implementation tomorrow," he said this week. Even with the ban being blocked for five months, arrivals from the six countries have plunged due to more rigorous vetting. Arrivals were down by about half in March and April, just 6,372, compared to 12,100 for the two months in 2016. —AFP

FORMER ISRAELI PM OLMERT GIVEN EARLY PRISON RELEASE

JERUSALEM: Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was granted early release yesterday from a 27-month prison sentence for corruption scandals that rocked Israeli politics and made him the first ex-premier to serve jail time. A six-person parole board overruled the state attorney office's objections and "ordered the early release of the prisoner," its decision said.

The 71-year-old Olmert, premier between 2006 and 2009, was convicted of graft and entered prison in February 2016. His release, scheduled for Sunday, would be after he completes two-thirds of his sentence. Prosecutors can however appeal the decision. While Olmert's crimes were "severe," he was "punished for his deeds and paid a heavy price," the parole board said.

"The inmate underwent a significant rehabilitation process in prison and displays motivation to continue it," it added. "All this significantly diminishes the risk he will deviate again from honest practice." Olmert's lawyer Shani Illouz said the former prime minister was "happy" but still concerned about fresh allegations against him involving a book he is writing. "The committee accepted all our arguments," Illouz told public radio after the decision was read out in the Maasiyahu prison in central Israel. "As of now, Olmert will be released on Sunday."

Olmert is Israel's first former premier to serve jail time. He resigned as prime minister in September 2008 after police recommended he be indicted for graft, but remained in office until March 2009, when right-wing Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu was sworn in to the post, which he has held ever since. Olmert won international acclaim for relaunching peace efforts with the Palestinians at the Annapolis conference in the United States in 2007, but they failed to bear fruit and the corruption charges against him have come to define his legacy.

The parole committee's decision comes after Olmert was rushed to hospital after experiencing chest pains in prison last week. The former premier underwent examinations which determined he was healthy and he returned to prison after a number of days. A picture of a gaunt Olmert in hospital robes eating from plastic utensils found its way to social media, evoking a wave of sympathy from the public as well as politicians calling for his early release.

'Impeccable' prison behavior

Even with his impending release, Olmert could still face new criminal charges. Earlier this month, the state attorney's office instructed police to investigate suspicions Olmert had smuggled a chapter of a book he was writing out of prison, an act that would constitute a felony due to the "secretive" content, the justice ministry said.

Police had raided the office of the Yediot Aharonot publisher and seized Olmert's manuscript as well as other materials out of fears their dissemination — prior to the mandatory censorship they would be subject to — could cause "severe security damage", the justice ministry said. The investigation was ongoing, with the state attorney's office expected to announce in the coming days whether they would seek to press fresh charges against Olmert over his conduct around the book.

The parole board had in its yesterday decision addressed the issue, rejecting the state attorney's argument that it displayed "a pattern of ongoing dishonesty" and maintaining instead that it was a "disciplinary offence" that did not reflect Olmert's largely "impeccable" behavior. Olmert's original 27-month prison term was comprised of 18 months for taking bribes in the early 2000s in connection with the construction of Jerusalem's massive Holyland residential complex, eight months for a separate case of fraud and corruption, and another month for obstructing justice. —AFP



RAQA: An American sniper (R) and British fighter supporting the Syriac Military Council (SMC), a small minority of Christian fighters fighting alongside the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in the combat against the Islamic State (IS) group, guard a position in the suburb of Al-Rumaniya on the western outskirts of Raqa. —AFP

SYRIA CHRISTIANS BATTLE IS IN RAQA

'ISLAMIC CALIPHATE' STRADDLING AREAS UNDER ITS CONTROL

RAQA: An ivory-colored rosary swings from the rearview mirror of Abboud Seryan's pickup truck as he speeds through Syria's Raqa, inspecting the positions of fellow Christian fighters taking on the Islamic State group. Lively music blasts through the car speakers while the thin 23-year-old, wearing a military-style cap and a revolver tucked into his waist, waves to comrades in the western district of Al-Romaniya.

IS was ousted from the neighborhood earlier this month as part of the US-backed offensive to defeat the jihadists in their northern Syrian bastion. The ground assault is being carried out by the Syrian Democratic Forces, a majority Kurdish and Arab alliance, but dozens of Christians from the Syriac sect have also joined the fight. "We're participating in the liberation of Raqa in the name of all Syrians. There's no difference between Syriacs, Kurds, or Arabs. We're all brothers," Seryan says.

The jihadists "blew up Raqa's churches and forced Christians to convert to Islam. This is also why we're participating in this battle." Thousands of Syriac Christians once lived in Raqa alongside Armenians, Kurds and the city's mainly Sunni Arab population, but many fled when IS overran the city

in 2014. On June 29 of that year, IS declared the establishment of a self-styled "Islamic caliphate" straddling areas under its control in Syria and neighboring Iraq. Christians could remain in Raqa if they paid a special tax called the jizya or converted to Islam—but many of them chose to flee.

'Bullet in his head'

As the fightback against IS intensified the Syriac Military Council (SMC) formed in 2013 to defend the community during Syria's civil war-joined with the SDF. After a months-long operation to encircle Raqa, the SDF burst into the city on June 6 and are chipping away at jihadist-held districts, with help from heavy US-led coalition air strikes.

Now the SMC's fighters are battling jihadists on the frontline in Raqa, some proudly wearing their religion on their sleeves—literally. Many fighters have tattoos of rosaries inked around their wrists and the word "JESUS" printed down their forearms. From an SMC position in Al-Romaniya, its fighters look out over a landscape of buildings perforated with gaping holes, collapsed rooftops and concrete walls spilling into the streets. "The coalition air force car-

ried out intense strikes... This is why there's a lot of destruction in this neighbourhood," Seryan says. Aleksan Chmou, a Syriac fighter in a beige cap, says Syriac fighters coordinate closely with the SDF's other factions.

He says he is driven to fight by IS atrocities against Syria's minorities. "I'm sacrificing for what they did to our people, our sects, for the churches they blew up. For all these things," Chmou says. "Our Messiah Jesus Christ has a saying: if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn your left cheek to him," the 28-year-old says. "But for me, if someone slaps me on my right cheek, I'm going to put a bullet in his head."

'Nothing will stop me'

Most Syriac fighters in Raqa are young, like 23-year-old Fadi. "In some neighborhoods, we are on the front lines of the fight," he says, squinting in the sun as beads of sweat form on his temples. "We received military training and put on this uniform to fight Daesh, liberate our people and all the peoples of this region," he says, using the Arabic acronym for IS. His fellow militiamen have taken up position in a house overlooking IS-held neighborhoods. —AFP

YEMEN TROOPS KILLED IN PROVINCE BATTLE

ADEN: Six soldiers were killed in Yemen yesterday, a military source said, as government forces seek to cement their control over Marib province, east of the rebel-held capital. The source said 14 Shiite rebels were also killed over the past 24 hours in intense fighting for Sarwah, the last district in the mainly Sunni province still held by the rebels. The government has been battling since last year to retake the mountainous district which commands the

main road to the capital Sanaa. Despite the military intervention of a Saudi-led coalition in March 2015, the government's writ is still largely confined to the south and areas along the Saudi border. The government announced a shake-up of its military command on Wednesday. It also named new governors for three of the six provinces largely under its control—Hadramawt, Shabwa and the far-flung island of Socotra. Both

Hadramawt and Shabwa have seen significant activity by Al-Qaeda, which has taken advantage of the conflict between the government and the rebels to expand its presence. The World Health Organization estimates that more than 8,000 people have been killed in the conflict, most of them civilians. The country has also been hit by a deadly cholera outbreak and faces the risk of famine. —AFP



MOSUL: A picture taken yesterday, shows the destroyed Al-Nuri Mosque in the Old City of Mosul, during the ongoing offensive to retake the area from Islamic State (IS) group fighters. —AFP

IRAQI FORCES TAKE LANDMARK MOSQUE BLOWN UP BY IS

TROOPS ARE PUSHING DEEPER INTO THE OLD CITY

MOSUL: Iraqi forces yesterday captured the compound of a landmark mosque in Mosul that was blown up last week by the Islamic State group - a hugely symbolic site from where the top IS leader declared an Islamic "caliphate" nearly three years ago. The advance comes as the Iraqi troops are pushing deeper into the Old City, a densely populated neighborhood west of the Tigris River where the Al-Nouri Mosque with its 12th century Al-Hadba minaret once stood and where the IS militants are now making their last stand in what are expected to be the final days of the battle for Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city.

Iraqi Special Forces reached the Al-Nuri Mosque compound and took control of the surrounding streets yesterday afternoon, following a dawn push into the area, Lt Gen Abdul Wahab Al-Saadi of the elite force told The Associated Press. Damaged and destroyed houses dot the route Iraqi forces have carved into the congested district - along a landscape of destruction where the stench of rotting bodies rises from under the rubble.

Symbolic victory

Yesterday's push comes more than a week after Iraqi forces launched the operation to retake Mosul's last IS-held parts of the Old City neighborhood, with its narrow alleyways and dense clusters of homes. Taking the mosque is a symbolic victory - from its pulpit, IS

leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in July 2014 declared a self-styled Islamic "caliphate," encompassing territories then-held by the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq.

Iraqi and coalition officials said IS blew up the mosque complex last week. The Islamic State group has blamed a US airstrike for the destruction, a claim rejected by a spokesman for the US-led coalition. US Army Col Ryan Dillon told the AP that coalition planes "did not conduct strikes in that area at that time." IS had initially tried to destroy the Al-Nouri Mosque in July 2014, saying the structure contradicted their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Mosul residents converged on the area, however, and formed a human chain to protect it.

Last week's destruction was only the latest in a long series of priceless archaeological and cultural sites that the militants have ravaged across Iraq and Syria. In addition to pillaging hundreds of treasures and artifacts, IS fighters have damaged or destroyed dozens of historic places, including the town of Palmyra in Syria, home to one of the Middle East's most spectacular archaeological sites; the 2,000-year-old city of Hatra; and the nearly 3,000-year-old city of Nimrud in Iraq's Euphrates River valley.

IS hold shrinks

After months of fighting, the IS hold in Mosul has now shrunk to less than 2

square kilometers of territory but the advances have come at considerable cost. "There are hundreds of bodies under the rubble," said special forces Maj. Dhia Thamiir, deployed inside the Old City. He added that all the dead bodies along the special forces' route were of IS fighters.

Special forces Maj. Gen. Sami Al-Aridi acknowledged that some civilians have been killed by airstrikes and artillery in the fight for the Old City. "Of course there is collateral damage, it is always this way in war," he said. "The houses are very old," he said, referring to the Old City, "so any bombardment causes them to collapse completely." Al-Aridi said the clearing of the mosque will likely require specialized engineering teams since the militants have likely rigged the site with explosives.

The campaign to retake Mosul - formally launched in October - is in its final stages though the progress has been slow as the last militants there are holed up with an estimated 100,000 civilians, according to the United Nations. The fight for the city has also displaced more than 850,000 people and while Iraqi forces have had periods of swift gains, combat inside Mosul has largely been grueling and deadly for both security forces and civilians. In Baghdad, state TV declared the capture the Al-Nuri Mosque with an urgent text scroll that said: "The State of Myth Has Fallen." —AP

US PUBLISHES PAPERS ON 1953 IRAN COUP

DUBAI: Once expunged from its official history, documents outlining the US-backed 1953 coup in Iran have been quietly published by the State Department, offering a new glimpse at an operation that ultimately pushed the country toward its Islamic Revolution and hostility with the West.

The CIA's role in the coup, which toppled Prime Minister Mohammed Mosaddegh and cemented the control of the shah, was already well-known by the time the State Department offered its first compendium on the era in 1989. But any trace of American involvement in the putsch had been wiped from the report, causing historians to call it a fraud.

The papers released this month show US fears over the spread of communism, as well as the British desire to regain access to Iran's oil industry, which had been nationalized by Mosaddegh. It also offers a cautionary tale about the limits of American power as a new US president long suspicious of Iran weighs the landmark nuclear deal with Tehran reached under his predecessor.

It exposes "more about what we know about this milestone event in Middle East history and especially US-Iran history. This is still such an important, emotional benchmark for Iranians," said Malcolm Byrne, who has studied Iran at the non-governmental National Security Archive at George Washington University. "Many people see it as the day that Iranian politics turned away from any hope of democracy."

Nationalization of the country

The 1,007-page report, comprised of letters and diplomatic cables, shows US officials discussing a coup up to a year before it took place. While America worried about Soviet influence in Iran, the British remained focused on resolving a dispute over the nationalization of the country's oil refinery at Abadan, at the time one of the world's largest. Many also feared further instability following the 1951 assassination of Premier Ali Razmara.

"Nationalization of the oil industry possibly combined with further assassinations of top Iran officials, including even the shah, could easily lead to a complete breakdown of the Iran government and social order, from which a pro-Soviet regime might well emerge leaving Iran as a satellite state," one undated CIA analysis from the report warned.

Out of that fear grew TPAJAX, the CIA codename for the coup plot. Papers show the CIA at one point "stockpiled enough arms and demolition material to support a 10,000-man guerrilla organization for six months," and paid out \$5.3 million for bribes and other costs, which would be equivalent to \$48 million today. One CIA document casually refers to the fact that "several leading members of these (Iranian) security services are paid agents of this organization." The CIA also described hoping to use "powerfully influential clergy" within Shiite Iran to back the coup, something that would be anathema by the 1979 Islamic Revolution. It offers no definitive proof of that, though several documents show American officials in contact with Ayatollah Abol-Ghasem Kashani, an anti-British leader in the Iranian parliament who turned against Mosaddegh. The agency faced problems, however, chief among them Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi himself. Diplomats and spies referred to him as a "weak reed" and "petulant."

"His inability to take decisions coupled with his tendency to interfere in political life has on occasions been (a) disruptive influence," the US Embassy in Tehran warned in February 1953. Ultimately, his twin sister Princess Ashraf and a US general helped convince him. Mosaddegh was tipped off about the coup, and it appeared doomed as the shah fled to Baghdad and later Italy. But protests supporting the shah, fanned in part by the CIA, led to Mosaddegh's fall and the monarch's return.

Nuclear negotiations

The report fills in the large gaps of the initial 1989 historical document outlining the years surrounding the 1953 coup in Iran. The release of that report led to the resignation of the historian in charge of a State Department review board and to Congress passing a law requiring a more reliable historical account be made.

Byrne and others have suggested the release of the latest documents may have been delayed by the nuclear negotiations, as the Obama administration sought to ease tensions with Tehran, and then accelerated under President Donald Trump, who has adopted a much more confrontational stance toward Iran. Byrne said the new administration needed just two months to agree to release the documents. "That kind of speed is unheard of in the government unless there is some sort of political foundation," he said. —AP

BERLIN BLOCKS ERDOGAN GERMANY SPEECH

BERLIN: Germany said yesterday it had rejected a request by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to address ethnic Turks living in Germany next week on the sidelines of a G20 summit, sparking an angry response from Ankara. Berlin-Ankara relations have badly deteriorated amid disputes over Turkey's mass crackdown in the wake of a failed coup last year and a host of other rights issues.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said

Berlin had received a request for Erdogan to be able to address members of the three-million-strong Turkish diaspora in the EU country. "I explained weeks ago to my Turkish colleagues that we don't think that would be a good idea," Gabriel said during a Russia visit, pointing at stretched police resources around the July 7-8 summit G20 in Hamburg. "I also said quite frankly that such an appearance would not be appropriate given the current adversarial situa-

tion with Turkey," he added, stressing that Erdogan would however be "received with honors" at the summit.

The Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement that "it is regrettable that German politicians make unacceptable remarks motivated it seems by political calculations". The spokesman of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Erdogan said there was "nothing more natural" than the president meeting Turks

in Germany. "The attitude of Germany is unacceptable," AKP spokesman Mahir Unal told NTV television, adding that Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu would continue contacts on the issue.

Gabriel said he could "understand" his Social Democratic Party's chancellor-candidate Martin Schulz, who had said "foreign politicians who abuse our values must not be allowed to give inflammatory speeches in Germany". — AFP



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BERLIN: Demonstrators of the Avaaz campaign protest against the climate policy of US President Donald Trump as they wear masks of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Chinese President Xi Jinping and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, from left, prior to a gathering of European leaders on the upcoming G-20 summit in the chancellery. —AP

MERKEL SLAMS TRUMP AHEAD OF STORMY G20

VOWS TO MAKE STAND FOR CLIMATE PROTECTION

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel appeared headed for a collision course with US President Donald Trump yesterday after vowing to make a stand next week for climate protection and open markets at what is expected to be the most fractious G20 summit in years.

Merkel said that discussions at the July 7-8 gathering of world leaders in Hamburg would be difficult given Trump's climate scepticism and "America First" stance, but that she was determined to seek a clear commitment for the Paris accord against global warming and a pledge against protectionism. When Trump announced in early June he would withdraw from the Paris deal, "we knew that we could not expect discussions to be easy" at the G20 summit, Merkel told the German parliament.

"The differences are obvious and it would be dishonest to try to cover that up. That I won't do," she said, adding that the US exit from the 2015 Paris pact had made Europe "more determined than ever" to make the accord a success. Without naming names, she also warned that "those who think that the problems of this world can be solved with isolationism or protectionism are terribly wrong" and pledged to seek a "clear signal for open markets and against sealing off" at the summit.

Trump's divergent stance has left Western allies struggling to find a common front for the G20 gathering-unlike previous summits, when differences were drawn along global north-south and east-west lines. With Russian President Vladimir Putin,

Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Saudi Arabia's King Salman in the volatile mix for the power meet, the list of potential minefield issues also includes the Syrian war, the Ukraine conflict and the diplomatic shut-out of Qatar.

Trump's anti-immigration stance has also emboldened many of the EU's ex-communist members in the east, which have staunchly opposed Merkel's pleas to accept larger shares of the refugees who have flocked to Europe. With the fault lines multiplying, Merkel was to meet with her western European allies later Thursday to draw up a common battle strategy.

European cohesion

"Merkel has called a summit between Europeans because there is a problem with the relationship with Trump," said a diplomatic source, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It's necessary to ensure European cohesion because within the G20, it's complicated." Besides the transatlantic differences, "there is also a new European division growing between east and west," noted Jean-Dominique Giuliani, president of the Foundation Robert Schuman, a Paris-based think-tank.

The problems were buried when wealthier EU members supported the east with "financial flows towards central and eastern Europe", he said, adding that "they are reappearing again on the question of refugees". Threatening to deepen divisions, Trump will head to Warsaw for a summit of central and eastern European leaders, likely to include

Hungary's hardline Prime Minister Viktor Orban, a day ahead of the G20. European affairs journal Euractiv warned that "as some EU countries shun him and others welcome him with open arms, Trump could become the wedge that drives the Union apart".

'France is back'

Even Merkel's European guests-the leaders of G20 members France, Britain and Italy, as well as of invited countries the Netherlands, Spain and Norway-have very different relationships with Trump. Britain's Theresa May, who is leading her country out of the EU, has been derided at home for seeking to curry favor with the US leader, after she invited him for a state visit that sparked a national outcry.

French President Emmanuel Macron, who had been dubbed an anti-Trump by some with his strong pushback against Trump's climate stance, this week invited the US president to attend July 14 Bastille Day celebrations. "With Macron, France is back, there is a re-balancing that was necessary with the relationship with Germany," Giuliani said.

Ahead of the meeting, German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said it was important for Europe to face up to the US confidently. "The German government does not have an anti-US strategy, but in America, there are strategists who are planning an anti-Europe, anti-German agenda," he said. "We do not want to forcefully separate the US from Europe. But what we don't want either is to appear like an appendage of US policies." —AFP

VENEZUELA LOOKING TO FEND OFF 'COUP'

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro vowed yesterday to fend off what he called a coup attempt after a rogue cop allegedly dropped grenades from a helicopter in an attack the opposition and analysts said could be a hoax. The socialist president put the military on alert after the attack, a potentially dramatic escalation of the violence gripping the oil-rich South American country. The death toll rose by two more Wednesday to 79 in three months of daily street protests against Maduro, blamed for a crisis marked by shortages of food, medicine and other basics.

Maduro blamed the chopper attack on Oscar Perez, a police pilot-turned-actor who appeared in a video online claiming that he and other officers were launching an "aerial deployment" to push Maduro to quit. Beyond his police work, Perez has acted in a Venezuelan action film, "Suspended Death," and has posted photographs on social media of himself posing with weapons. "We are a coalition of military, police and civilian public servants... opposed to this transitional, criminal government," said Perez, flanked by four masked figures in black, two of them holding rifles.

Army on alert

Maduro has for months been fending off calls for elections to replace him, from opponents who blame him for a desperate economic crisis that has sparked hunger and deadly violence. He so far retains the public backing of the military high command-a factor that analysts say is decisive if he is to remain in power. Venezuela has seen three attempted military coups since 1992.

Maduro said no one was hurt in the helicopter attack, but branded it a "terrorist attack," part of an "escalation" by right-wing "coup" plotters. "I have activated the entire armed forces to defend the peace," he said in remarks broadcast from the presidential palace. Vice-President Tareck El-Aissami said later that the helicopter used in the attack had been found in Osma, a town near Caracas. No arrests had been made, he added. Photos circulating on social media showed a helicopter flying over Caracas as explosions were heard. In the video published by Venezuelan media, Perez called on Maduro to resign and for early elections to be held. Maduro said Perez had served as pilot for former interior minister Miguel Rodriguez Torres, a retired general who has since fallen out with the president.

Hoax or real?

Leaders of the opposition MUD coalition said there was not yet enough information to comment. "Some people say it is a hoax, some say it is real, some say that it was police personnel who really are fed up," opposition legislative speaker Julio Borges told reporters. "Whatever it is, it is very serious. It all points to one conclusion: that the situation in Venezuela is unsustainable."

Defense affairs specialist Rocio San Miguel said it was unlikely that "a military uprising is occurring." Maduro last week said he had replaced the heads of the army, navy, central strategic command and the military police. "It is possible that the helicopter incident was organized by the government, whether to distract attention... or provoke a reaction from the middle ranks in order to continue purging the security forces," said Venezuelan analyst Diego Moya-Ocampos of London-based economic research group IHS Markit. —AFP



TURMERO: This photo provided by Heibort Barrios shows people running off with meat from a butcher shop, as an employee reaches to close the shop entrance. —AP

NEW KOREA LEADER LOOKS FOR COMMON GOALS WITH TRUMP

WASHINGTON: South Korea's new leader vowed to stand firmly with US President Donald Trump against North Korea, playing down his past advocacy of a softer approach toward the nuclear-armed nation as he made his first visit as president to Washington. President Moon Jae-in offered an emotional tribute Wednesday to Marines who fought in a fierce battle in the Korean War that helped in the mass evacuation of Korean civilians, including his own parents. Moon said that without those American sacrifices, he would not be here today.

"Together we will achieve the dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program, peace on the Korean Peninsula and eventually peace in Northeast Asia," Moon said, after laying a wreath at a Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia, as he began his first overseas trip since taking office last month. A monument at Quantico commemorates the 1950 Battle of Chosin Reservoir, when heavily outnumbered American forces fought a rearguard action against advancing Chinese communist troops that bought time for about 100,000 Korean civilians to be shipped out to safety - 14,000 of them on a single vessel that ferried out Moon's parents. Moon was born in South Korea in 1953.

Moon was underscoring his personal commitment to the US-South Korean alliance in the face of questions over whether his inclination toward engagement with North Korea despite its rapidly advancing nuclear capability could lead to strains in relations with Washington. Moon's conservative predecessor, who was impeached in a bribery scandal, took a hard line toward North Korea, similar to Trump. Despite Moon's softer stance, the North's rapid tempo of missile tests has continued, deepening US fears that the American mainland could soon be within range.

'All options'

Trump's national security adviser, HR McMaster, said Wednesday that the US is preparing "all options" for North Korea, "because the president has made clear to us that he will not accept a nuclear power in North Korea and a threat that can target the United States." The talks between Moon and Trump, which begin with dinner and then formal talks today, come amid intense wrangling over North Korea.

China is pushing the United States to start negotiations with the North. That prospect appears unlikely as Trump grows frustrated over Beijing's level of economic pressure on the North, its wayward ally. North Korea shows no sign of wanting to restart talks on abandoning its nuclear weapons program. Although Moon hopes to forge a personal bond with Trump, there's little in common between them: one a brash American tycoon-turned-populist president, the other a former human rights lawyer who received an elite education but opted for grassroots activism.

Moon sought to allay concerns over differences with Trump in interviews before his visit. He described his approach to the North as consistent with the US administration strategy of "maximum pressure and engagement." The White House is also playing down differences. Moon told The Washington Post that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is "unreasonable" and "very dangerous" and that pressure was necessary. But Moon said sanctions alone would not solve the problem, and dialogue was needed "under the right conditions."

Six prominent former US officials, including former Defense Secretary William Perry and former Secretary of State George Shultz, on Wednesday also called for dialogue. They wrote to Trump, urging him to establish communication with North Korea "to avoid a nuclear catastrophe." Missile defense is another contentious topic.

Full deployment

Earlier this month, Moon surprised US officials by delaying the full deployment of a US system intended to protect South Korea and the 28,000 US forces based there against North Korean missiles. Seoul's previous government supported the deployment despite local opposition and Chinese objections. Moon's government has ordered an environmental review before allowing additional launchers for the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD). South Korean officials say that does not mean they are placating China or reversing the decision, which risks angering Washington. —AP



WASHINGTON: Protesters hold signs and an effigy of US President Donald Trump as he arrives at the Trump International hotel in Washington, DC, on June 28, 2017 to attend a fundraiser for his 2020 campaign. —AFP

TRUMP TRASHES MEDIA, CHEERS WINS AT \$10 MILLION FUNDRAISER

AN EVENING OF HOBNOBBING BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

WASHINGTON: Republican donors paid \$35,000 apiece to hear familiar a message from President Donald Trump: The media, particularly CNN, keep trying to take him down, and yet Republicans just keep on winning elections. He noted with pride that his party had won four special elections this year. The president was whisked a few blocks from the White House to the Trump International Hotel, his name-branded Washington venue, for an evening of hobnobbing behind closed doors Wednesday with major party financiers, including Las Vegas casino mogul Steve Wynn.

One attendee stood out: Nevada Sen. Dean Heller, part of a small group of Republicans whose objections just a day earlier had doomed - at least for now - the Senate's effort to repeal and replace President Barack Obama's health care law. Trump did not single out Heller, but Wynn, the lead fundraiser for the Republican National Committee, gently jabbed him by urging all Republicans to come together to support the president's agenda.

Breaking with tradition

Breaking with the tradition of his predecessor, Trump barred reporters from the event, despite an announcement earlier in the day that a pool of reporters would be allowed inside. Two people in the room, demanding anonymity to discuss a private event, relayed the messages given by Trump and Wynn. "It's a political event, and they've chosen to keep that separate," White House deputy press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders said when asked why the event was closed to the media.

Trump's first re-election fundraiser comes some 40 months ahead of Election Day. Joined by first lady Melania Trump and top advisers, he held court for about

two hours at an event attended by about 300 people that raised more than \$10 million. The money is to be spread among Trump's campaign, the RNC and other GOP entities.

Security was tight at the hotel, where guests in long gowns and crisp suits began arriving around 5 pm But the event also drew critics. The president's motorcade was greeted by dozens of protesters, who hoisted signs with slogans like "Health care, not tax cuts" and chanted "Shame! Shame!" Among the event's guests: Longtime GOP fundraiser-turned television commentator Mica Mosbacher and Florida lobbyist and party financier Brian Ballard.

The Trump International Hotel has become a place to see - and be seen - by current and former Trump staffers, lobbyists, journalist and tourists. Several Washington figures of considerable influence popped into the lobby even though they didn't plan to attend the fundraiser in an adjacent ballroom. Trump's decision to hold a fundraiser at his own hotel has raised issues about his continued financial interest in the companies he owns.

Business interests

Unlike previous presidents who have divested from their business holdings or interests before taking office, Trump moved his global business empire assets into a trust that he can take control of at any time. That means that when his properties - including his Washington hotel - do well, he stands to make money.

Trump technically leases the hotel from the General Services Administration, and profits are supposed to go to an account of the corporate entity that holds the lease, Trump Old Post Office LLC. It remains unclear what might happen to any profits from the hotel after Trump

leaves office, or whether they will be transferred to Trump at that time.

Under campaign finance rules, neither the hotel nor the Trump Organization that operates it can donate the space for political fundraisers. It must be rented at fair-market value and paid for by the Trump campaign, the RNC or both. Although this was Trump's first major-donor event, his re-election campaign has been steadily raising money since the day he was inaugurated, mostly through small donations and the sale of Trump-themed merchandise such as the ubiquitous, red "Make America Great Again" ball caps. The campaign raised about \$7 million in the first three months of the year, according to Federal Election Commission reports.

The RNC also is benefiting from the new president's active campaigning, having raised about \$62 million through the end of last month. The party has raised more online this year than it did in all of 2016 - a testament to Trump's success in reaching small donors. Trump's re-election money helps pay for his political rallies. He's held five so far, and campaign director Michael Glassner says those events help keep him connected to his base of voters.

The constant politicking, however, means it is challenging for government employees to avoid inappropriately crossing ethical lines. Some watchdog groups have flagged White House employee tweets that veer into campaign territory. White House spokeswoman Lindsay Walters says the employees work closely with lawyers to avoid pitfalls. Walters also says the White House takes care to make sure that Trump's political events and travel - including the Wednesday fundraiser - are paid for by the campaign and other political entities. —AP



SYDNEY: This file photo taken on July 14, 2008 shows Cardinal George Pell officiating the opening mass of World Youth Day (WYD). —AFP

PELL CASE BRINGS THE TAINT OF ABUSE TO TOP OF THE CHURCH

CATHOLIC CHURCH STRUGGLING TO BURY DAMNING ACCUSATIONS

VATICAN CITY: Australia's move to bring sexual assault charges against Cardinal George Pell is the latest chapter in a damaging saga of abuse that the Catholic church has struggled to draw a line under. Pell has been ordered to appear on July 18 before a Melbourne judge to answer unspecified multiple counts arising from his country's extensive inquiry into decades of abuse in institutions dealing with children.

The 76-year-old is the most senior cleric yet to be directly implicated in a multi-faceted scandal that has plagued the Church for decades but has never before come so close to its highest ranks. As head of a powerful economic department, Pell is one of Pope Francis's closest advisors, his point-man on cleaning up Vatican finances and the number three in the Holy See's hierarchy. As such he is a much higher-profile figure than Keith O'Brien, the former archbishop of Edinburgh who renounced his rights as a cardinal in 2015 after admitting misconduct in relation to alleged drunken sexual assaults on young priests.

Pell has admitted errors in managing abuse by priests under his authority but denies any personal wrongdoing and Francis has offered him strong support. But regardless of its outcome, the impending court case seems likely to further tarnish the image of a global institution long accused of complacency over a cancer in its midst. Francis came to office promising a zero tolerance approach and an end to the kind of cover-ups portrayed in "Spotlight", the Oscar-winning 2015 drama about how the Boston Globe uncovered

widescale, unpunished abuse in the local diocese in the early noughties.

Shameful blocking of reforms

Critics say Francis's record has been patchy at best with his handling of some high-profile cases under scrutiny and attempts at institutional reform stalled by internal resistance. Francis won praise in 2014 when he established an advisory panel on combating abuse that included two former victims. But Ireland's Marie Collins and Britain's Peter Saunders have both since quit the commission.

Collins left in March, accusing Vatican officials of "shameful" blocking of reforms, months after Saunders said he felt betrayed by Francis and was sidelined. The final straw for Collins came when officials in the Vatican Curia refused to guarantee that all letters from victims/survivors would receive a response, or cooperate with the commission on developing safeguarding guidelines. Other panel members responded that reformers had to be patient, describing change as a "long-term education job."

The Vatican has since pledged to ensure complaints are responded to in the way Collins had demanded and Vatican watcher Iacopo Scaramuzzi says two senior officials have been sidelined for obstructionism. "It is not true to say the pope is doing nothing. But there is a lot to do and it is an issue the Church has still to resolve," he told AFP. In 2016, Francis issued a decree intended to allow bishops to be removed from office if they failed to deal correctly with abuse cases. But the order was never passed down after

being deemed surplus to requirements by the department in charge of implementing it.

Crime and sin

In the case of O'Brien, Francis was criticised for allowing him to keep his title of cardinal and failing to publish details of an internal Church investigation. Similar issues arose in the case of Mauro Inzoli, an Italian priest convicted in 2012 of sexually abusing minors. Inzoli was finally defrocked only last month after Francis had initially reversed his predecessor Benedict's order to expel him from the priesthood.

Italian prosecutors had been severely critical of the Vatican's refusal to hand over details of the Church's own investigation of the priest. And abuse survivors say Francis's desire to display mercy to the likes of Inzoli betrays a dangerous ambivalence about the nature of his actions. "The pope needs to remember there is a difference between crime and sin," said Joelle Casteix of the US survivor network SNAP. Scaramuzzi said Francis had missed a trick by not writing an obligation to hand over abusers to civilian authorities into canon law, the Church's internal set of rules.

Despite the criticism, some say Francis has made a decent fist of addressing an issue most societies have struggled to deal with. In Ireland, one of the countries where the clerical abuse scandal has had the most profound impact, then-premier Enda Kenny said in March that Francis deserved praise for his efforts. In 2011, Kenny had accused the Vatican of "dysfunction, disconnection and elitism" on the issue. —AFP

KILLING PEOPLE OVER COWS 'NOT ACCEPTABLE': MODI

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi condemned yesterday a string of murders targeting minorities under the pretext of protecting cows, which are considered sacred by many Hindus, after critics accused the government of turning a blind eye. Modi's remarks-his first on vigilantism in nearly a year-came just days after a Muslim teenager was stabbed to death on a train after being accused of carrying beef. "Killing people in the name of Gau Bhakti (cow worship) is not acceptable.

This not something Mahatma Gandhi would approve," Modi said. India has been reeling from a spate of vigilante murders in recent months, targeting Muslims and low caste Hindus accused of killing cows or consuming beef. In the latest high-profile incident, 15-year-old Junaid Khan and three of his brothers were attacked last week in an apparent row over seats as they travelled home by train from New Delhi. Police have arrested four men over the attack.

One of Khan's brothers said the attackers accused them of carrying beef, a meat popular among many Indian Muslims and low caste Dalits, but shunned by most upper caste Hindus. Khan's murder drew thousands to the streets across Indian cities on Wednesday, with demonstrators calling for an end to the wave of mob violence under the slogan "not in my name". Modi expressed his "pain and anguish at the current environment" in India, listing incidents of vigilante violence. "No person in this nation has the right to take the law in his or her own hands in this country. Violence never has and never will solve any problem," he said.

Emboldened vigilantes

Rights groups have warned of a culture of impunity for crimes committed against Muslims and urged Modi's Hindu nationalist government to act. "The pattern of hate crimes committed against Muslims with seeming impunity... is deeply worrying," said Aakar Patel, executive director of Amnesty International India, in a statement this week.

The rights group said at least 10 Muslim men had been lynched or killed in public since April in suspected hate crimes. Last year Modi criticised the vigilantes and urged a crackdown against groups using religion as a cover for committing crimes. But critics say vigilantes have been emboldened by the election in 2014 of his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party, and have urged the government to be more vocal in condemning the attacks.

The slaughter of cows and the possession or consumption of beef is banned in most Indian states, with some imposing life sentences for breaking the law. There has been a spike in attacks by 'cow protection' vigilante groups, who roam highways inspecting livestock trucks for any trace of the animal. In April, a Muslim man was beaten to death by a mob in Rajasthan state after they discovered cows in his truck. The man was a dairy farmer transporting milk cows. —AFP



AHMADABAD: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the centenary celebrations of Gandhi Ashram, a residence of Mahatma Gandhi. —AP



SHANGHAI: This picture taken on June 1, 2017 shows Li Tao (L) and Duan Rongfeng (C) walking their dog together with Li Tao's mother, He Fenglan. —AFP

'COMING OUT' IS A FAMILY AFFAIR FOR CHINESE GAYS

NEW GEN TAKING A STAND ON THEIR SEXUALITY

SHANGHAI: When Piao Chunmei's son told her he was gay, she reacted the way many Chinese parents do, sleepless and crying for days due to the lingering shame of same sex relationships in China. But she eventually accepted her son and is now part of an expanding network of gays and their parents who help other families cope with the stress of coming out in a country which until 2001 classified homosexuality as a mental illness.

Deep-seated cultural expectations for each generation to produce a male heir-heightened by China's "one-child policy", which expanded to two in 2015 — added to the pressure to conform. But a new generation is more willing to take a stand on their sexuality, despite what their relatives may think. Piao and her fellow volunteers bridge the generation gap. "We don't want to shut them in the closet where no one can see them," said Piao, an effervescent 54-year-old who works for a Shanghai cosmetics equipment company.

Taiwan's top court recently ruled in favour of same-sex marriage, Shanghai's low-key annual gay pride festival is in its ninth year, and opinion surveys increasingly indicate greater public acceptance of China's gays. On May 20, "Lover's Day" in China, a group of mothers, affiliated with the US-founded PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), caused a stir by appearing at a Shanghai park where parents regularly display advertisements seeking marriage matches for their heterosexual children.

The gate-crashing parents did the

same for their gay children-before police escorted them out. But coming-out in family-oriented China remains traumatic, often tearing households apart or leading to suicides. The fears are so intense that advocacy groups estimate millions lead a double life-hiding their identity by marrying heterosexuals. "Family is the most important part (of coming out) in terms of our emotions, but it's the hardest area to break through," said Duan Rongfeng, a 40-year-old gay Shanghai architect.

Bridging the gap

Volunteers for PFLAG say they are seeing more people confident enough to come out, especially in cosmopolitan cities such as Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai, which are more relaxed attitudes than rural areas. PFLAG organizes various discreet events but earlier this month arranged its biggest yet, a four-day ship cruise from Shanghai to Japan, which organizers said drew more than 1,000 people.

The group took to sea to avoid interference from authorities, as LGBT events are often abruptly shut down. But Duan, also a volunteer, estimates more than 100,000 parents and children nationwide have been helped by PFLAG's loose network, which he said is expanding to smaller cities and China's interior. Piao's initial devastated reaction to her son's announcement reflects the lack of understanding common among Chinese parents.

She wondered whether she had caused it by giving him too much can-

dy as a child or if he was corrupted at university or by foreigners. She asked him to seek a medical cure. But after reading about gay suicides, she relented. "I was afraid he would disappear before my eyes," she said.

'He can't change'

Anguished parents reach out to Piao daily by phone, social media, or in person. To some, she is affectionately called "Big Sister Mei," but others accuse her of corrupting their kids. Her unwavering message: you can't change your child's sexual identity. "I would give my life away to make him change," she admits of her own son. "But he can't."

Piao said most Shanghai parents eventually come around and families end up stronger, but success is less assured outside major cities. Fearing ostracism, Piao and her son relocated several years ago from northeastern China to Shanghai. The support network helped He Fenglan, 55, pull out of a year-long spiral of despair after her son came out three years ago. "The first thing I thought was, how could I face relatives? How could I face society? How could I face close friends? The problem of 'face' is very important," said He, who was "repulsed" by homosexuality. But she added: "You see more and more gays coming out, as well as their parents. You feel you are not alone in this world." Today she embraces her son's identity and the prospect of his relationships with a uniquely Chinese twist. "Having two sons is even better. My one son has turned into two." —AFP

'MOTHER MUSHROOM' JAILED FOR 10 YEARS

HANOI: A prominent Vietnamese blogger known as 'Mother Mushroom' was jailed for 10 years yesterday, her lawyer said, during a brief trial rights groups decried as "outrageous". Nguyen Ngoc Nhu Quynh, whose pen name derives from her daughter's nickname "mushroom", was arrested in October 2016 and later charged with anti-state propaganda over critical Facebook posts about politics and the environment.

Vietnam's one-party state keeps a tight clamp on dissent and routinely jails activists, bloggers and lawyers who speak out against the communist regime. The 37-year-old blogger faced a maximum of 12 years in prison, and her lawyer said the heavy sentence she received at the closed-door trial was "harsh". "I am not happy with the result of the trial today," Nguyen Kha Thanh told AFP, adding that Quynh would likely appeal.

AFP was barred from attending the one-day trial in south-central Khanh Hoa province yesterday, which was heavily guarded by police, according to images on social media. Thanh said Quynh was calm throughout the trial. In a pre-sentence statement she admitted no guilt and instead used the opportunity to send a message to her two kids and mother, the lawyer added. "She apologized to her mother and the two kids for what effect this has had on them, but she said they must be very proud of her," Thanh told AFP.

Woman of Courage award

Quynh was charged under Article 88 of Vietnam's criminal code and held incommunicado with no access to lawyers until June 20, according to Thanh. She has been a vocal critic of Vietnam's human rights record, civilian deaths in police custody and the government's handling of a toxic leak that killed tons of fish last year. She was arrested in Nha Trang on October 10 as she was visiting a fellow activist in prison.

In the verdict, the judge said Quynh had defamed the government, harmed national unity, eroded popular trust of the government and undermined national security. She was also convicted for publishing inaccurate information to humiliate the police and erode public trust in them, based on her reports about police brutality. Human Rights Watch earlier decried the trial as "outrageous" and demanded her release.

"The scandal here is not what Mother Mushroom said, but Hanoi's stubborn refusal to repeal draconian, rights-abusing laws that punish peaceful dissent and tarnish Vietnam's international reputation," Phil Robertson, HRW deputy Asia director said in a statement Wednesday. The United States, Britain and the European Union have all called for Quynh's release. —AFP

NATO OKS TROOP BOOST IN AFGHAN

BRUSSELS: NATO will increase troop numbers in Afghanistan to help train local forces facing a resurgent Taliban but will not return to a combat role, Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday. The alliance ended its longest-ever military operation in 2014 when it handed over post-9/11 frontline duties to the Afghan military and took on an advice and training mission. But NATO commanders have asked for more troops following recent Taliban gains, stoking fears that NATO could get sucked back into the conflict just as it faces a host of new threats including Russia, terrorism and cyberattacks. "I can confirm we will increase our presence in Afghanistan," Stoltenberg said as he arrived for a defense ministers meeting at the 29-nation alliance's headquarters in Brussels. An increase of up to 3,000 troops from the current figure of 13,500 soldiers is under consideration, diplomatic sources said, though Stoltenberg did not give a precise figure. He said 15 countries had already pledged more contributions and he hoped for more.

"We have to understand this is about training, assistance, advice... It is not to conduct combat operations but to help the Afghans fight," Stoltenberg said. The extra troops could help bolster Afghan special forces, improve Kabul's air force to provide ground support and evacuations, and step up officer training, he added.

About half of the soldiers in what is known as the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan are currently from the US. US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is due to brief the allies later Thursday but Stoltenberg said he did not expect him to give specific troop numbers. "We will look into how we together can... have enough troops to help the government and break the stalemate and so lay the ground for a political solution," Stoltenberg said. —AFP

CHINA'S XI ARRIVES IN DIVIDED HONG KONG

HONG KONG: President Xi Jinping arrived in Hong Kong yesterday to mark 20 years since its return to China by Britain, with activists under arrest as authorities sought to avoid embarrassment during anniversary celebrations. A huge security operation shut down large parts of the normally throbbing city, with thousands of police deployed to keep away demonstrators angry at Beijing's tightening grip on the freedoms of nearly eight million people.

The lockdown reflects Beijing's concern that nothing should be allowed to taint the high-profile visit, ahead of a key Communist Party congress later this year which is expected to cement Xi's position as the most powerful Chinese leader in a generation. More than 20 activists-including Joshua Wong and young legislator Nathan Law-remained in custody Thursday evening after being arrested for causing a "public nuisance" during a Wednesday night protest.

The three-day visit is Xi's first since becoming leader in 2013, and comes three years after huge pro-democracy protests crippled the semi-autonomous city for months as "Umbrella Movement" campaigners camped out on thoroughfares. Xi's carefully choreographed trip began with his arrival at Chek Lap Kok airport on an Air China plane, where he emerged holding hands with his wife, singer Peng Liyuan, to be welcomed by a marching band and flag-waving children.

"After nine years I am once again stepping on Hong Kong soil. I feel very happy. Hong Kong has always had a place in my heart," a smiling Xi said in a brief speech on the tarmac. He added that China would support Hong Kong's development and improve people's livelihoods "as it always has" but suggested he felt the city could be doing better by saying he "sincerely wishes Hong Kong can once again achieve splendour".

Xi said he wanted to ensure Hong Kong's "one country, two systems" set-up, which is enshrined in the handover deal and gives it rights unseen on the mainland, "is on a stable, longlasting path". Pro-democracy campaigners say the system is being eroded as Beijing interferes in a range of areas, from politics to education and media. One reporter shouted to Xi on the airport tarmac, asking whether he would free cancer-stricken Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, who was granted medical parole earlier this week. The question was ignored.

Xi later met unpopular city leader Leung Chun-ying and praised him for his "firm" handling of the city and dealing with what he called "accumulated problems". He went on to visit the new West Kowloon Cultural District where children performed Chinese opera and Xi oversaw the signing of an agreement on the development of a local branch of China's National Palace Museum.—AFP

BHUTAN PROTESTS ON BORDER ROAD

NEW DELHI: The tiny Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has protested to its mighty neighbor China over road building in disputed territory that set off new frictions between Beijing and the Indian government yesterday. China made a new demand yesterday that Indian troops return to their side of the border between India's Sikkim state and Tibet on the Chinese side. Highlighting the widening tensions over the remote mountain zone, Bhutan's ambassador to New Delhi, Vetsop Namgyel, said his government had called on China's People's Liberation Army to stop building the road near where the Bhutan, Indian and Chinese borders meet.

"We have issued a demarche to China through its diplomatic mission here," Namgyel told the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency. He said the road was "in violation of an agreement between the two countries." Bhutan, which has a population of less than 800,000, and China do not have formal relations but maintain contacts through their missions in New Delhi. "Doklam is a disputed territory and Bhutan has a written agreement with China that pending the final resolution of the boundary issue, peace and tranquility should be maintained," the ambassador said.

There is a dispute over the sovereignty of the district, which China calls Donglang. The showdown is, however, part of a wider dispute between India and China over the 4,057 kilometer border through mountain passes. India's army chief, General Bipin Rawat, travelled to Sikkim yesterday, just days after Beijing accused Indian border guards of crossing into its territory to stop the construction of the road.—AFP



MANILA: This picture taken on May 7, 2017, shows the grieving wife and relatives during the burial of an alleged drug dealer killed by unidentified gunman.—AFP

YEAR OF FEAR, BUT NO QUICK WIN IN PHILIPPINE DRUG WAR

HOPES OF AN END TO THE WAR HAVE FADED

MANILA: Meth addict Reyjin is still able to score on the frontlines of the Philippines' drug war, living proof that a year of fear has failed to kill the illegal narcotics trade as promised. President Rodrigo Duterte swept to an election victory last year largely on a pledge to wipe out his nation's illegal drugs trade within three to six months, saying he would do so by killing thousands of people. Duterte fulfilled his vow on the death toll, drawing condemnation from rights groups who warned he may be orchestrating a crime against humanity as police and unknown assassins filled slums with bullet-ridden corpses. But, as the president marks a year in office today, the drug trade continues and hopes of a quick end to the war have long faded.

"I can buy anytime I want, except when the police patrols are out at night," Reyjin, a father-of-three, said as he recounted to AFP how he had maintained his addiction to the crystal methamphetamine known locally as "shabu". Reyjin, a high school dropout and part-time construction worker, said the meth supply tightened in the first three months of the crackdown and the price doubled to 200 pesos (about \$4) a pop. But meth flooded back in around October, although the quality went down, according to Reyjin, who asked his real name not be used for security reasons.

"Now it's diluted, and getting a hit takes more effort," he said. Still, the price of the lower-quality shabu has remained steady since October at 150 pesos, according to Reyjin. He said hooded gunmen had shot dead a drug dealer

near his house over the past year, while the bodies of two other alleged users were found in his community. But Reyjin said this had not stopped others from getting into drugs, singling out several 15-year-olds who picked up bottles for recycling for a living. Reyjin said many of his friends had been on lists of drug suspects drawn up by local officials and submitted to the police. He said he was not yet on the lists, though admitted his jobless wife was petrified. "She fears I will get myself killed, so she forbids me from going out at night," he said.

'Unprecedented accomplishments'

Critics of Duterte's crackdown have claimed that, besides thousands of people being murdered and the rule of law breaking down, such a drug war is unwinnable. "We could not win the war on drugs through killing petty criminals and addicts," former Colombian president Cesar Gaviria wrote in an opinion piece for the New York Times. "I hope Mr Duterte does not fall into the same trap." Duterte, who has typically countered critics of his drug war with abusive tirades, responded to Gaviria's advice by describing him as "that idiot".

Police have killed 3,116 drug suspects in the crackdown, according to official figures. Another 2,098 people have been killed by unknown assailants in drug-related crimes, while there have been 8,200 more murders with no known motive, according to the police. While Duterte has insisted that his police officers are killing drug suspects only in self defence, he has also conceded the force is "corrupt to the core".

He made the admission in January

after it was revealed police in an anti-drug unit kidnapped a South Korean businessman to extract a ransom from his wife, then murdered him. Still, Duterte and his aides insist they are winning the drug war, albeit not as quickly as promised. The drug trade nationwide has shrunk by roughly one quarter over the past year, causing crime rates to drop by more than 28 percent, according to the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

More than 82,000 suspected dealers have been arrested while 1.3 million users have reported themselves to authorities, the agency said. "Due to the intensified anti-drug campaign, unprecedented accomplishments (on) all fronts have been recorded," the agency's director-general, Isidro Lapena, said this month. Duterte's crackdown has also proved popular, with surveys consistently showing an overwhelming majority of Filipinos support the president and his tactics.

Buoyed by popular support, Duterte continued throughout his first year to make inflammatory comments that rights groups said could be seen as incitement to murder, such as saying he would be "happy to slaughter" three million addicts. He also extended his election campaign timeframe, vowing to continue the crackdown until the last day of his six-year term. Like many other relatives of people killed, Maria Lusabia-whose 44-year-old son was murdered by unknown assailants in a Manila slum after reporting himself as a user to authorities-knows she will find no justice. "No one wants to tell us who killed him," Lusabia told AFP this week.—AFP

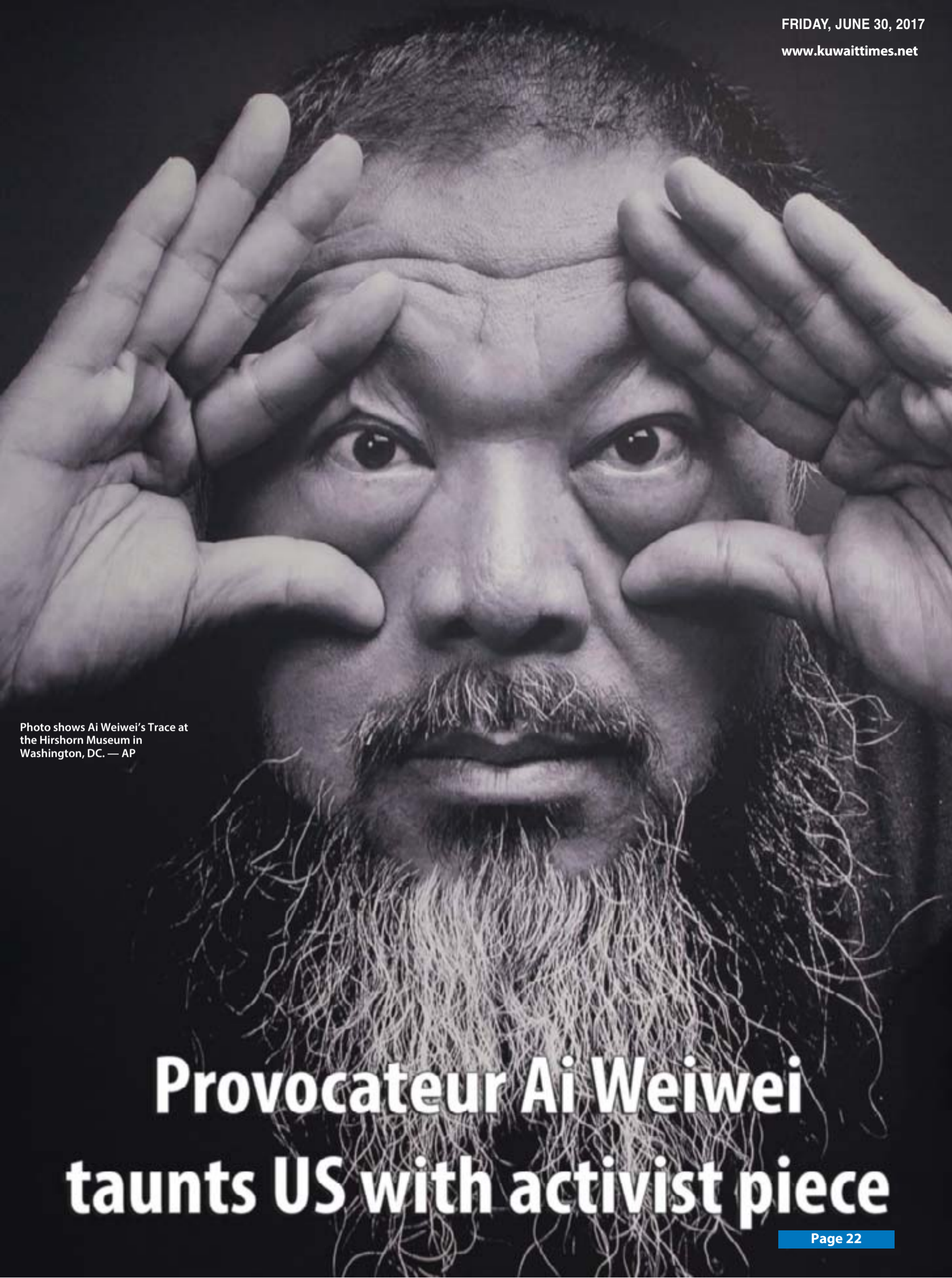


Photo shows Ai Weiwei's Trace at the Hirshorn Museum in Washington, DC. — AP

Provocateur Ai Weiwei taunts US with activist piece

Holland, cast delight in 'Spider-Man: Homecoming'

One thing is certain: Culture has not been lacking in takes on Spider-Man for the past 15 years. First there was Tobey Maguire, who under the direction of Sam Raimi for three films ushered in the modern superhero era, and then there was Andrew Garfield whose two films with Marc Webb were immediately forgettable. And now, like all obedient franchises, they're trying to start all over again, this time with the much more age-appropriate Tom Holland in "Spider-Man: Homecoming." And you know what? Superhero cynicism aside, "Spider-Man: Homecoming" is really fun. Director Jon Watts, whose only previous feature film credit is the indie thriller "Cop Car," has confidently put his stamp on the friendly neighborhood web-slinger by making one bold move: actually casting teenagers to play teenagers.

Yes, after two films with late 20-somethings donning the Spidey suit and getting bitten by that pesky spider, Spider-Man finally gets to be a kid (and we get to skip over the whole origin/Uncle Ben story). Instead, Watts' film, which is upsettingly credited to six screenwriters, picks up with Peter Parker (Holland) right before, during and after the events of "Captain America: Civil War," which introduced Holland's Spider-Man in that epic airport Avengers battle.

Fight disaster areas

Instead of a "last week in Marvel" segment to catch up, we're given a refresher via Peter's perspective. He's just an excited kid who filmed the whole adventure and ever since has been thirsting for more Avengers action. He tries, endearingly, to prove his mettle on his own as he waits idly in Queens for a call from Tony Stark - giving directions to the elderly, retrieving stolen bikes and doing flips on command.

What he doesn't know is that for eight years, there has been a supervillain emerging in his town in the form of a wronged construction worker, Adrian (Michael Keaton), who decided to break bad after losing a job to a government



This image released by Columbia Pictures shows Jon Favreau, from left, Robert Downey Jr and Tom Holland in a scene from 'Spider-Man: Homecoming.' — AP photos

crew that clears post-superhero fight disaster areas. Peter, with his true-blue heart and naivete and eagerness to prove himself, of course takes on more than he can handle, while also trying to navigate high school, homework, crushes and the awkwardness of just being a teenager. Time passes easily and just when you might worry that you don't actually care about any of the characters, the story throws a great curveball that carries interest to the end.

The film is overflowing with stellar talent, even in the smallest of roles and not counting the Marvel loaners in Robert Downey Jr. (who oozes charisma and charm even when phoning it in for a handful of scenes) and Jon Favreau. In the high school alone, there's the too-cool Michelle (Zendaya), the crush Liz (Laura Harrier) and the adorable breakout best friend Ned (Jacob Batalon). Hannibal Buress and Martin Starr are there, too, to add reliable laughs.

Adrian's bad-guy crew includes Logan Marshall-Green and Michael Cernus. Even Spider-Man's suit has an Oscar winner behind its voice (Jennifer Connelly).

'Aunt May is hot'

Then of course there is Holland, a terrific actor since "The Impossible," who is the perfect amount of empathetic, excitable and clueless to make Peter Parker work now and for years to come. For the most part, "Homecoming" is a joy. It's light-hearted, smart, a little meta and the first Marvel film to really consider what it might be like for kids living in a world where superheroes are real. My only quibble with "Spider-Man: Homecoming" is that for all of its charming and infectious realism about race, high school life and class issues, it has a bit of a woman problem. Simply: every significant and semi-significant female character looks like a model.



This image released by Columbia Pictures shows Tom Holland in a scene from "Spider-Man: Homecoming."

It wouldn't be an issue were the film not so spot-on with casting such a realistic variety of men and teenage boys, or if it were less concerned with hammering down on the "Aunt May is hot" bit that goes a little too far, but when taken together you start to wonder if maybe things would have been different if just one of the six screenwriters was a woman. But just as Peter has some growing up to do, so does this young franchise. "Spider-Man: Homecoming," a Sony Pictures release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "sci-fi action violence, some language and brief suggestive comments." Running time: 133 minutes. Three stars out of four. MPAA Definition of PG-13: Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. — AP

Film academy invites Thor, Wonder Woman to joins its ranks

Thor, Captain America, Wonder Woman and Betty White have been invited to join the film academy. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences revealed its latest invitees on Wednesday, which include several artists from the worlds of action and comedy. "We are looking in areas that historically we hadn't," film academy president Cheryl Boone Isaacs said in an interview. The organization invited 774 new members to join its ranks - the largest class ever. Chris Hemsworth, Chris Evans, Gal Gadot, all famous for their superhero roles, were invited to join the actors' branch.

Other actors receiving invites include White, Dwayne Johnson, Riz Ahmed, Terry Crews, Chris Pratt, Anna Faris, Priyanka Chopra, Donald Glover and Zoe Kravitz. Several "Saturday Night Live" alumnae were also invited: Amy Poehler, Molly Shannon, Maya Rudolph and current stars Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones.

"It takes a lot to be a comedic actor," Boone Isaacs said, "and certainly the branch is recognizing this talent." She said the organization's efforts toward inclusivity may have inspired interest among a broader range of prospective members, who

must be sponsored by existing members to be considered. The film academy reports that its new class is 39 percent female and 30 percent non-white. The organization has been diversifying its ranks after two years of #OscarsSoWhite and criticism of its overwhelmingly white and male voting body. Women now comprise 28 percent of academy membership and non-whites account for 13 percent. "This conversation that the academy has been having for the last couple years has really energized our base, has really energized our members and the community," Boone Isaacs said.

Besides including filmmakers from traditionally overlooked genres, the new class of invitees also represents 57 countries. "We've recognized great talent around the world, but in one area we were not as active, and that is membership," she said. Oscar nominees are automatically considered for membership. "Moonlight" writer-director Barry Jenkins has been invited to join both branches, but he'll have to pick one. "Hidden Figures" director Theodore Melfi and documentarian Ezra Edelman ("O.J.: Made in America") also received invitations.

Joss Whedon ("The Avengers"), Simon Pegg ("Shaun of the Dead") and Phil Johnston ("Zootopia") were invited to the writers' branch. "Get Out" writer-director Jordan Peele was invited to both writing and directing branches, while his Comedy Central collaborator Keegan-Michael Key, was invited to join the actors' branch. The music branch extended invites to Lin-Manuel Miranda, Justin Timberlake, Nick Cave, Terry Lewis, Jimmy Jam and "La La Land" composers Benj Pasek, Justin Paul and Justin Hurwitz. — AP



This combination photo shows actors, from left, Leslie Jones, Anna Faris, Chris Pratt and Gal Gadot, who are among the 774 people invited to join the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. — AP



This 2017 photo provided by Profiles in History shows an R2-D2 droid pieced together over several years from different props used in the first five Star Wars movies. — AP photos

R2-D2 DROID USED IN STAR WARS FILMS SELLS FOR \$2.76M

An R2-D2 droid that was used in several "Star Wars" films has sold at auction for nearly \$3 million. The auction house Profiles in History said the 43-inch tall unit that was compiled from parts used throughout filming of the original trilogy sold for \$2.76 million at an auction Wednesday. There was no information about who purchased the droid, which was the most expensive item offered in a movie memorabilia auction that included numerous props from the "Star Wars" franchise. Other items up for sale included Luke Skywalker's lightsaber from the first two films, which sold for \$450,000 and Darth Vader's helmet from the original film sold for \$96,000.

The Calabasas, California-based Profiles in History had estimated the droid could fetch up to \$2 million before Wednesday's sale. Other space-themed film and television memorabilia was also for sale, with a collection of 23 ships from "Battlestar Galactica" and "Buck Rogers" sold for \$1.8 million. A helmet worn by late actor Bill Paxton on the set of "Aliens" sold for \$51,000. Not all the items that sold were out of this world. The lighted dance-floor from "Saturday Night Fever" sold for \$1.2 million." — AP



This 2017 photo provided by Profiles in History shows a light saber used by Mark Hamill's Luke Skywalker character in the movies "Star Wars" and "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back" that will be among several Star Wars-related items up for auction on June 26-28, 2017, by the auction house in Calabasas, Calif.

Students soar at rigorous dance school

Wednesday was the last day of School for New York City public school students, but students in the rigorous Ballet Tech dance program will be back for a four-week summer session July 10. Ballet Tech was founded by choreographer Eliot Feld to provide tuition-free dance training along with academics. The school is a full-service Public School for Dance in grades four through eight, with about 50 fourth-graders admitted

each year out of the thousands who audition. Many of the students travel from the Bronx or Queens to attend the school near Union Square in Manhattan.

High school students continue studying dance at Ballet Tech while taking academic classes at the Professional Performing Arts School in midtown Manhattan, a selective public high school. Some Ballet Tech alumni have gone on to careers in dance.

Graduate Spartak Hoxha, for instance, is a member of New York City Ballet's corps de ballet. Ballet Tech students perform at the Kids Dance series at the Joyce Theater in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood each June. — AP



High school students at Ballet Tech rehearse "The Jig Is Up," at the Joyce Theater in New York. — AP photos



Jordan Miles and Asia You, tenth grade dance students at Ballet Tech, perform "The Jig Is Up," with schoolmates at the Joyce Theater in New York.



Middle school students at Ballet Tech rehearse "Meshugana Dance," the day before starting four days of performances at the Joyce Theater in New York.



Some of Ai Weiwei's Trace at Hirshhorn exhibition is seen at the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC. The portraits laying on the floor are made from Legos. — AFP

PROVOCATEUR AI WEIWEI TAUNTS US WITH ACTIVIST PIECE

Chinese artist Ai Weiwei is blunt. When he wanted to make a political statement about crackdowns on dissent, he brought portraits of 176 political prisoners to one of America's most infamous high-security federal prisons. "Trace," first shown at Alcatraz prison off the San Francisco Bay in 2014, opened Wednesday in Washington for a six-month run at the Hirshhorn museum. More than 1.2 million Lego bricks were assembled by hand to form the individual portraits, arranged on the floor in Ai's latest subversion of readymade materials.

Several of the "prisoners of conscience" chosen by Ai-himself held under house arrest without charge for three months in 2011 and banned from traveling outside China until 2015 -- are likely to trigger debate in the United States. Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning, behind some of the biggest leaks of classified documents in US history, share the first of six zones of 30 portraits with historical figures like

Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr, as well as Shaker Aamer, a Saudi citizen and British resident held at Guantanamo Bay without trial or charge for more than 13 years until 2015. One of the "Trace" protagonists, former CIA officer turned whistleblower John Kiriakou, was among those who attended Ai's first ever public talk in Washington late Tuesday.

The artist-who was interrogated more than 50 times during his house arrest for alleged tax evasion-explained he had "wanted to do something related to prisoners who lost their freedom because of their beliefs, because they had different ideas or opinions." "I have this understanding about why certain society doesn't like art, or hate people who have this freedom in terms of thinking or expressing themselves," said Ai. "But for me, this is the most important part of art." —AFP

LA City Council oks plans for George Lucas museum

The Force was with George Lucas on Tuesday as the Los Angeles City Council moved with lightsaber speed to clear the way for a \$1.5 billion Museum of Narrative Art the "Star Wars" creator plans to build down the road from his alma mater. After hearing from Lucas himself, the council voted 14-0 to approve an environmental impact report and other requirements for the museum's construction adjacent to the University of Southern California. "For a very brief time I actually grew up here," said Lucas, who earned a degree in film from USC. "That's where I learned movies. That's where I learned my craft. Basically where I started my career was in school here."

Lucas said his museum won't just focus on movies, however, but on the entire history of narrative storytelling, from the days of cave painting to digital film. "I realized that the whole concept of narrative art has been forgotten," he told the council. With Tuesday's approval, plans are to break ground in Exposition Park, south of downtown, as early as this year and open the museum to the public in 2021. The city says the project will cost taxpayers

nothing because Lucas and his wife, Mellody Hobson, are footing the bill. "It is the largest private gift in our city, in our state or in our nation's history," said Councilman Curren D Price Jr, whose district takes in the park.

It will feature all forms of narrative storytelling, said the museum's president, Don Bacigalupi. He said its exhibits will include story boards, costumes, props and various other elements that went into making "Casablanca," "The Wizard of Oz" and other classic films. And, yes, there will be plenty of cool "Star Wars" stuff there too. "Everything from Luke Skywalker's first lightsaber to Darth Vader's costume and helmet," said Bacigalupi. The Lucas-Steven Spielberg "Indiana Jones" films also will be represented. Numerous interactive programs for children, film students, academics and others will be offered.

Lucas said he hopes the museum will serve as inspiration to people of all ages, but especially to children, encouraging them to create a better world. Popular art, he said, is the glue that holds people together, that teaches them that while we may have dif-

ferences we have similar aspirations. In addition to USC, the Museum of Narrative Art will be within close proximity to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the California Science Center and the California African American Museum. Although Lucas' affection for USC is clear - he and his foundation have given the school tens of millions of dollars over the years - it was once assumed he'd put his museum in his hometown of San Francisco. Or if not there, then his wife's hometown of Chicago.

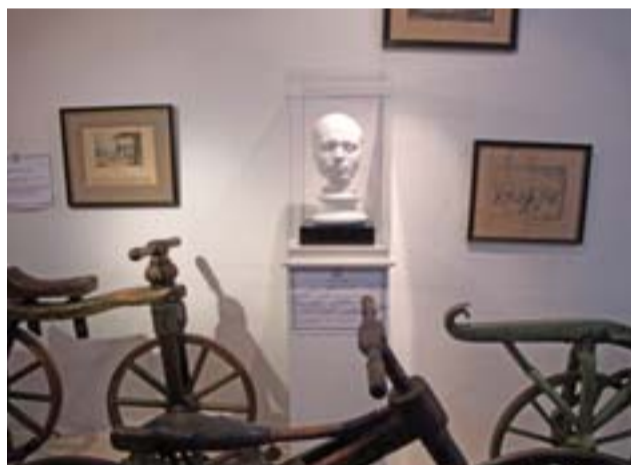
But when it came time to clear away all the bureaucratic hurdles, just like the upstart Rebel Alliance in "Star Wars," it was Los Angeles that prevailed. "I wanted to put it in my hometown. They said no. Mellody wanted to put it in her hometown. They said no. We were both basically heartbroken," Lucas said. "And then we said, 'All right, let's clear the boards and find a place that really wants it.'" — AP



Nguyen Huy Luan puts chicken feather dusters together at a house in the outskirts of Hanoi.



Photos show old bicycles at the museum of the bicycle and the motorcycle in Domazan, southern France. — AFP photos



CYCLING: BICYCLE CELEBRATES LITTLE-KNOWN 200TH ANNIVERSARY

For the next month the eyes of the sporting world will be on the Tour de France, yet few people know what a significant year this is for the bicycle. Much to the chagrin of amateur historian Claude Reynaud, the 200th anniversary of the invention of the bicycle is likely to pass by with little pomp or fanfare as millions of pairs of eyes gaze at television screens or from the roadside to watch Chris Froome and his rivals battle for yellow jersey glory.

And yet, the 104th edition of the world's most prestigious cycle race starts in Dusseldorf tomorrow, in the country where 200 years ago Baron Karl Drais invented the bicycle. Billions of people use bicycles, many on a daily basis, and yet few are aware of this important milestone. "No-one is celebrating it because the information is unknown," complained Reynaud, a viticulturist from the south east of France. "While the Tour de France starts in Dusseldorf this year, when the Grand Boucle presented its route, no-one evoked the bicentenary-it's unknown outside of a small circle of initiates."

Reynaud has fought a 50-year battle to defend the memory of the invention of the bicycle. He even houses a museum in his honor at his chateau in Domazan, in the Occitanie region of France. "I could talk about it for hours," Reynaud said of the history of the bicycle, his gravelly voice almost drowned out by the sound of crickets. He has written several self-published books on the subject that are sold only at his chateau. "It's from passion," he said of his tireless labors. Reynaud said it was on June 12, 1817 that "for the first time, a man took a two-wheeler and went on a road" in the Mannheim region of what was then the Grand Duchy of Baden, now part of southwest Germany.

Baron Drais's "velocipede" (nicknamed the 'dandy horse') had no pedals or a chain and required the rider to propel his "Laufmaschine" (running machine) by pushing off the ground with his feet. But the Baron's genius was that "he discovered balance on two wheels", said Reynaud. "Like all ingenious inventions, it seems obvious, but someone had to think it. He invented the two-wheeler!"

'Ridiculous'

However, the running machine was far from a resounding success and had its faults, notably proving difficult to control on bumpy surfaces. When Drais organized a demonstration of the velocipede at the Jardin de Luxembourg park in Paris in 1818, "it

was a disaster". "People thought it was ridiculous and made cartoons about it," said Reynaud, who has included some of those caricatures in his museum. "At first, it didn't work, he couldn't sell it, people made fun of it." But the idea had taken root and was soon being copied, particularly in France, although many draisines (as it was known there) were adorned with horse heads. In 1866, Pierre Lallement attached pedals to the draisine and invented a pedal-powered velocipede.

The next stage in the development of the bicycle saw a huge front wheel attached with a small rear wheel, but it was a machine that was far from stable and resulted in some spectacular crashes. It wasn't until 1885 that two similar-sized wheels were attached to the velocipede. "After that it was just a case of technical improvements, but all the ideas already existed-brake cables, pedals, chains," said Reynaud. "The bicycle enjoyed an exponential success, especially from 1890 with the invention of the tyre." Reynaud's Chateau de Bosc welcomes 6,000 visitors a year to its museum but the amateur historian's greatest regret is that he doesn't own an original Laufmaschine to put on display. "There are only four left and they belong to national museums. They're out of reach, I'll never have one." — AFP





A general view shows Lebanon's Bisri Valley south of Beirut.



A general view shows a pine tree forest in the Bisri Valley.



A general view shows the remains of the 13th Century monastery of Saint Sophia and the Church of Mar Moussa in the Bisri Valley.

Lebanon dam planned over seismic fault line stirs fears

'THESE LANDS ALLOWED ME AND MY BROTHER TO GET AN EDUCATION'

Lebanon's government says a dam planned for a valley near Beirut is vital to tackle chronic water shortages, but the location on a seismic fault line has raised fears among residents. "How can you build a dam in an earthquake zone? We don't even have houses that are earthquake-proof," said Amer Meshmushi, a resident of Bisri Valley, 35 kilometers (20 miles) south of Beirut. He grew up hearing about the last major earthquake on the Roum fault, in 1956, which killed 135 people and damaged thousands of houses including his family home in Basaba village.

"My brother was still little, and they had to drag him out from under the rubble," the 50-year-old recalled his parents telling him as a child. Lebanon's government and the World Bank say the Bisri dam is desperately needed to address water shortages afflicting greater Beirut's 1.6 million residents. They insist the structure will be safe and say measures will be taken to mitigate seismic risks. But Meshmushi's concerns are shared by local activists, including Raja Noujaim, head of the Association for the Protection of the Lebanese Heritage.

"When we look at the region's history and geography, we see that all of its valleys are the result of the fact that it is a seismic zone," he told AFP. Activists say an earthquake could cause

the dam to burst and that the structure and its reservoir would put pressure on the fault line and increase seismic activity.

'Wiping out farmers'

The World Bank and Lebanon's Council for Development and Reconstruction (CDR), a government agency that supervises major infrastructure projects, identified the valley as a prime location for a dam thanks to its abundant water, wide basin and proximity to Beirut. In a report, the World Bank said a panel of four "internationally recognized experts" recruited by the CDR had reviewed safety studies, adding that the dam's design was "consistent with international best practice". The World Bank told AFP that tests showed the dam had "a resistance to shocks above the one provoked by the 1956 earthquake," which measured a six on the Richter scale-similar to the strength of the quakes that devastated central Italy last year.

Eli Mussali, the CDR engineer overseeing the project, said the dam could "withstand earthquakes up to eight on the Richter scale, which is a very high degree." He also downplayed the possibility that the structure could provoke seismic activity, saying there was no evidence for such a phenomenon. And he noted the country's largest dam, in the eastern region of



A picture shows a partial view of the Bisri river in the Bisri Valley, south of Beirut.



A Roman built bridge which was renovated during the Ottoman rule over the Bisri river .

Qaraoun, is situated atop the major Yammouneh fault line. "It is geologically normal for faults to run between mountains, where rivers run and dams are built," he said.

At present, Lebanon stores just six percent of its water in reservoirs. Many people rely on illegally drilled wells that are increasingly over-exploited and produce water of dubious quality. Construction of the Bisri dam is expected to begin later this year with a \$617-million (544-million-euro) price tag, mostly covered by a World Bank loan. It will take nine years to finish and will be the country's second-largest dam, with a capacity of 125 million cubic meters (4.4 billion cubic feet) in a reservoir covering 450 hectares (1,100 acres). Land belonging to 15 villages will be gobbled up by the facility, including Meshmushi's fields. "Does it serve Beirut's interests to wipe out farmers?" he asked. "These lands are the source of our livelihoods. They allowed me and my brother to get an education."

'Where will we go?'

Bisri Valley is covered in a patchwork of farms growing everything from lemons and pine trees to strawberries and pomegranates, mostly tended by seasonally hired Lebanese laborers and Syrian refugees. The CDR plan includes a fund to compensate owners of the 869 plots of land that will be expro-

priated, but it remains unclear if the farmers will also be compensated for losing their jobs. Fifty-year-old Abu Salem has farmed beans in the village of Marj Bisri for 25 years. "I'm a farmer, not a civil servant. I don't have anywhere else to go," he said, sitting on a tractor.

"I taught my children how to farm. If we leave here, where will we go?" Locals also fear for archeological sites that will disappear under the water. They include the Mar Musa church in Marj Bisri, a tiny stone edifice locals say is hundreds of years old and has become a shrine for residents of all faiths. Authorities proposed to dismantle the church and rebuild it elsewhere, but villagers rejected the offer. Further downstream are five columns, four standing and one toppled, that are believed to be Roman and could be evidence of a larger archaeological site. That area will one day be at the bottom of the reservoir. The CDR's Mussali said there are plans for the Antiquities Department to excavate the site and decide if it is worth saving. But residents say the dam project should be scrapped entirely. "We shouldn't be thinking about building anything in the area, whether a dam or anything else," said Noujaim. "It's dangerous. This project mustn't be done." — AFP



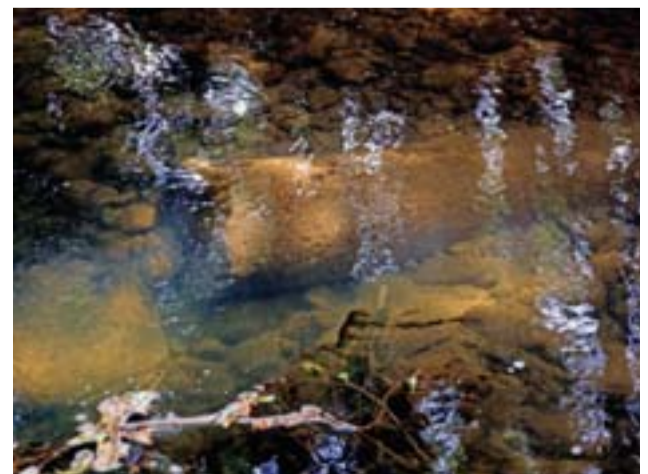
A general view shows the 13th Century Church of Mar Moussa in the Bisri Valley.



A general view shows columns which are believed to be part of ruins of the ancient temple of Ashmoun in Lebanon's Bisri Valley.



A general view shows part of the Bisri Valley.



A picture shows a granite column in the Bisri river in the Bisri Valley.— AFP photos

COOKING ON DEADLINE: **Summer Berry Clafoutis**

By Katie Workman

One of the great, great, great (three times, that's how great it is) pleasures of summer is figuring out what to do with all that fruit that floods the markets. Stone fruits like plums, peaches, nectarines, cherries; melons of all stripes; and berries. Oh, the berries.

We eat them by the fistful when we're lucky. Did you ever read Robert McCloskey's "Blueberries for Sal"? It was one of my

favorite children's books, especially the part where Sal and a baby bear meet while overindulging in a thicket of blueberries. When I read that book as a kid, and then later to my own kids, I knew where Sal and that bear were coming from. But besides funneling them straight into our mouths, there are other excellent ways to use berries. One of my favorites is a clafoutis.

A clafoutis (or clafouti) is a baked dessert of French origin, classically made with cherries - even more classically made

with cherries with the pits left in them - all ensconced in a lightly sweetened, pancake-like batter that is poured over the fruit. It puffs up enticingly all around the fruit when it bakes. And it's great with all kinds of fruit, especially berries. AND it's easy. This particular version cools into a custardy cake, and if you can serve and eat it slightly warm, you will be in for heightened deliciousness. A few cracks may appear as it cools - that's just the way it goes.



SUMMER BERRY CLAFOUTIS WITH WHIPPED CREAM

Ingredients

Start to finish: 1 hour 15 minutes

Serves 8

Berry Clafoutis:

1 pint blueberries

1 pound strawberries, halved, or quartered if large

1 tablespoon Chambord, framboise or other berry liqueur

4 large eggs

2/3 cup granulated sugar

1/2 teaspoon kosher salt

2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups half-and-half

Confectioners' sugar for dusting

Sweetened Whipped Cream:

1 1/2 cups heavy or whipping cream

2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Butter a shallow 2 1/2-to-3-quart casserole. Place the berries in the casserole. Sprinkle the Chambord over it, toss the berries with the liqueur, and spread them out in a single layer. In a large bowl, whisk the eggs well, and then add the sugar, salt and vanilla, and whisk well to combine. Dump in the flour and whisk until the batter becomes very smooth. Slowly pour in the half-and-half and whisk until incorporated. Pour the batter over the berries.

Bake for 45 to 50 minutes until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean, and the whole thing is prettily puffed and nicely browned. Cool the pan on a wire rack until the clafoutis is slightly warm, or at room temperature, knowing that it may crack in a spot or two, which is fine.

While the clafoutis is baking, make the whipped cream. In a large mixing bowl, using a whisk or a hand mixer, whip the cream with the 2 tablespoons of confectioners' sugar just until slightly firm peaks are formed. Dust the clafoutis with additional confectioners' sugar before serving, and serve with whipped cream.

MAKING A YUMMY SPANISH TORTILLA WITHOUT ALL THE CALORIES

By Melissa D'Arabian

Growing up in the Southwest, a tortilla was a thin flatbread used to wrap around grilled meat and make tacos. I was in my 30s before I visited Barcelona, Spain, and was served a Spanish tortilla - a completely different dish - and I fell in love instantly.

A Spanish tortilla is something like an incredibly tasty frittata made from sliced potatoes, vegetables and usually a flavorful cured meat, like Spanish chorizo or sausage. The tortilla is served hot or cold, cut into wedges - small pieces for an appetizer, or larger ones for a main dish. It's perfect at room temperature for picnics, warm for a lazy Sunday supper, or chilled in the fridge, for an easy-to-graze protein-filled snack.

I was surprised to discover how many calories were packed into one serving of this Spanish favorite. I decided to give it a little makeover by making three changes. First, given the current trendiness of trading out potatoes for cauliflower, I couldn't help but wonder if this swap would hold up for my beloved Spanish tortilla.

The answer is yes. The trick is to cut the cauliflower head into thin planks (chunky florets that fall away can be used for another recipe.) Steam the planks in a covered shallow saute pan with a little bit of water just for a few minutes to tenderize, and the cauliflower planks can be layered into the tortilla just as you would use cooked potato slices. The second change was in the egg batter itself: I used reduced fat milk instead of the full fat version (or cream, depending on the

recipe), and removed yolks from half the eggs, leaving the tortilla decidedly yellow enough and eggy, not egg whitey.

Lastly, I used reduced fat soy chorizo, which gives a ton of flavor for a fraction of the fat and calories of the regular version. (It's fresh chorizo, which is Mexican, not Spanish, but it works beautifully.) Surprisingly, you can buy this at many regular grocery stores, but if not, substitute reduced fat Italian sausage for a nice, if different, flavor. The combination of shredded zucchini and onion, cooked until tender and sweet, made the body of the tortilla both tasty and nutritious. The result is an inexpensive, quick dish loaded with protein and veggies.



LIGHTENED SWEET ZUCCHINI AND CHORIZO SPANISH TORTILLA

Ingredients

Servings: 8
Start to finish: 30 minutes
1 small head of cauliflower, cut into thin planks, about 1/4-inch each
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 yellow onion, chopped, about 1 cup
2 medium zucchini, shredded with large holes on a box grater, about 3 cups
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
2 ounces soy chorizo, or reduced fat chorizo (or other reduced fat sausage)
2 eggs
2 egg whites

1/2 cup reduced fat milk
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
Salt and pepper
Olive oil in a mister, or nonstick spray

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. In an 8-inch nonstick saute pan, place the cauliflower planks and cover with 1/4 cup water and a pinch of salt. Place on medium high heat, cover and steam until the cauliflower is tender, about 6 minutes. Remove the cauliflower, blot dry, and set aside.

Wipe the pan dry and add the olive oil and onion and cook over medium heat, stirring, until the onions soften, about three minutes. Add the grated zucchini, and cook until tender, stirring

often, about five minutes. Add the chorizo and smoked paprika, and cook another five minutes, stirring often, and then remove from heat. In a medium bowl, whisk together the whole eggs, the egg whites and milk. Add the zucchini and chorizo mixture and stir. Add the cheese and stir.

Spray the pan with a little olive oil in a mister (or nonstick spray). Pour the egg mixture into the pan, and then layer in the cauliflower planks, gently pressing into the eggs. Bake until egg is completely set, about 15-18 minutes. Remove pan from oven and allow it to cool for at least five minutes. Use a spatula to loosen the tortilla from the pan gently, and then carefully flip the whole tortilla onto a large plate or cutting board. Cut into wedges and serve. May be served warm or chilled. — AP

Chembra Peak rising over the palms in Wayanad



Travel

Getting lost in steamy northern Kerala

Kerala

Wild jumbos roam the forests of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary

If you have ever dreamt of spending a night on a kettuvallam (rice barge) houseboat, cruising the backwaters while an on-board chef prepares fresh barbecued fish or a succulent Keralan curry, you've already got the Kerala bug. But there's a whole other Kerala lying north of Kochi that is only just starting to capture travelers' imaginations. The beaches, backwaters and wildlife sanctuaries in the southern half of the state are now established stops on the traveler trail, but those in the know are turning their attention to the north of Kerala, where the Arabian Sea beaches are just as gobsmacking, the wildlife sanctuaries just as teeming, the temple rituals even more mind-blowing and the impact of tourism is only just starting to be felt. Welcome to Northern Kerala, authentically Indian and far from the regular tourist trail.

Blissful beaches & backwaters

When people talk about Keralan beaches, they usually mean Kovalam and the clifftop backpacker enclave at Varkala. Both are beloved and lovely, but touristy and crammed in the winter season, with wall-to-wall resorts, restaurants and souvenir stalls. But north of Kochi is an interrupted and virtually people-free stretch of Arabian Sea coast just begging to be explored, and not a trinket seller in sight.

The best and most accessible seashore is around Kannur. Just 8km south of Kannur city, Thottada beach is home to fishing villages and a growing number of charming, local homestays, where you can stay relatively cheaply with a local family and eat some of the best home-cooked meals India has to offer. If you like your beaches golden and deserted, other than the odd fishing boat being hauled in from the breakers, this is the place to stay - just endless sand as far as the eye can see and glorious sunsets melting into the ocean. Be warned though: the sand shelves steeply and rips are strong, so paddling rather than swimming may be the order of the day.

The north can't really compete with the famous backwaters in the south, but the Valiyaparamba inlets near Bekal, fed by five rivers and fringed by palm groves, have the advantage of being almost tourist-free. Visitors can take their pick of the houseboats offered by Bekal Boat Stay, or unwind in a stilted bungalow homestay care of Valiyaparamba Retreat (touristdesk.in/valiyaparambarettreat.htm). Travelling south of Bekal, you'll find more Malabar coast beaches - including India's only drivable beach at Muzhappilangad - before you reach tiny Mahé, surrounded by, but not actually part of, Kerala. Technically, this is an outpost of the Union Territory of Puducherry (Pondicherry), formerly part of French India. Today the riverfront promenade with its Parisian-style street lamps and whitewashed churches are the most obvious concessions to Frenchness, but the town is also exempt from Kerala's strict licensing laws, and every third shop is an open-fronted 'wine' store with giant brand-name signs catering to Keralan duty-free shoppers.



Wild beaches without a sunbather in sight, northern Kerala



A houseboat floats gently on the still Valiyaparamba backwaters



Brooding skies over the hills of Wayanad



Tremendous temple rituals

The southern Keralan art form of kathakali - a highly stylized and elaborate form of temple dance, mime and theatre - is understandably renowned, but fewer people know about the equally absorbing theyyam, a unique and ancient temple ritual combining dance, religion, mysticism and just a hint of madness. Unlike the kathakali performances on show in Kochi, theyyam is not a show for tourists: it's an experience felt deeply by all those watching and performing. After hours of make-up, costume preparation and devotional ceremonies, dancers gather in kavus (sacred groves) and the mayhem unfolds. Amid frenzied dancing and wild drumming, participants slip into a form of trance, losing their physical identity and taking on the role of a deity. There are nearly 450 different theyyam characters, each with a distinct pattern of face paint and intricately crafted headdresses and robes.

Performances take place on auspicious occasions throughout northern Kerala, starting at dusk and often continuing until sunrise. From November to April there should be a theyyam performance happening somewhere in the Kannur region almost every night - local homestays can help you find it. As a visitor you'll be welcomed if you follow temple rules and remain unobtrusive and respectful. A close second to attending a theyyam ritual is witnessing the Keralan martial art of kalarippayat, an acrobatic display of weapons, shields and fire-blowing leaps; some of the best practitioners of the northern school of kalarippayat trained at the CVN Kalari academy in Kozhikode.

Where the wild things are

From the northern coast, a series of serpentine roads wind up to the hills - the dizzying hairpin bends as you climb from Kozhikode offer spectacular views back to the plains. The

highlands of Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary easily rival the famous southern wildlife sanctuaries of Periyar and Neyyar for natural beauty, and this is the best place in southern India to spot wild elephants. Even from the roadside outside the sanctuary, elephants are regularly seen in the undergrowth, along with deer and monkeys; there are even a few rarely seen tigers.

The Wayanad Region covers a vast area of northeast Kerala, with the actual sanctuary forming a relatively small area on the borders with Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The rest of Wayanad is a peaceful mix of spice and tea plantations, rice paddies and villages, offering easily accessible hill trekking for active types. More sedentary visitors may prefer to check into one of Wayanad's remote homestays and eco-resorts to relax, surrounded by unspoilt nature.

Practicalities

The traditional route to northern Kerala has been from the south, but roads run south from Mysore, Bangalore and Ooty through Wayanad, offering a backroute to this Keralan backwater. Things will get easier in 2017, when Kannur International Airport opens. About 30km from Kannur town, this will be the biggest air-hub in Kerala, allowing travelers to fly directly into northern Kerala, avoiding long bus or train rides from the existing airports at Kochi and Trivandrum. Homestays are nothing new in Kerala - owners of ancestral homes in Kochi practically invented the concept in India - but they are flourishing now in northern Kerala, both on the coast and in the highlands. They're still very much family homes though, uncluttered, unaffected and where home-style cooking is guaranteed. (www.lonelyplanet.com)



Theyyam performer in all his finery





Aries (March 21-April 19)

You do well in projects that have you working with the public. You may find yourself working with the public quite a bit for the next few days. You can handle emotional and personal issues, vulnerable areas, where angels fear to tread. People sense this about you and trust you with sensitive matters, inner worries and questions of personal identity. Yours is a reflective mind, a mirror for others. You may find yourself acting as a mediator or negotiator. You could win awards for this talent. You find it easy to accept the ideas and thoughts of others. An unexpected visit from a friend this evening may have you splurging for dinner or being tempted to attend a club or entertainment of sorts. Be careful that you do not overspend too much.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You tend to be creative and original with the development or expression of your talents and this may be the day that brings in new ideas and spontaneity. You are gifted and even lucky when it comes to making your creative vision multiply. Life seems to work out magically. You receive the support you need for whatever you want to accomplish in the business world. If you write music and not lyrics, lyrics may be what you hear in your creative mind today. You seem to understand what the public wants and mass marketing is also a strong possibility for you. You love to work with young people and could make a superb teacher or coach. You may want to teach some form of music. Matters of the heart, marriage, etc., are areas where you can help.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are coming into a creative and competitive phase, a phase in which you want to be admired and appreciated for what you do and who you are. You are an aggressive major mover, a starter, able to initiate and get things moving. Your energies run effectively toward making yourself felt in the material, physical outer world. You are an action person who gains the attention of others and seems to get people motivated and organized. You can accomplish much today and others learn by watching you. The circumstances of your life suggest extroversion. One of your strong talents is to manage people that are successful. Your motto is to keep your eye on the goal and remain coordinated and focused on your own success.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your personality hangs on your mind, mental activity and the world of communication. This is the keystone that binds the rest of you together. Ideas, mental things, information exchange and the interrelating of all these are central to your outer makeup. There will be plenty of opportunities for communicating your ideas or making speeches about your ideas today. Communication is the interface that holds the rest of you together. All things pale beside your basic drive and the emotions you so freely exhibit. This could all be results from some competition, performance, exhibition, etc. A period of heightened communication with others begins now. This is a good time, when you and your efforts really pay off well.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Financial transactions are favored today. As a buyer or owner of a store, you may have researched a business or a product and found just what you want to stock in your own department. You have a basic self-esteem that is plain to all who meet you and you enjoy your independent thinking. Your sense of discrimination and innate good taste means that you know good items from bad and are a connoisseur of all that is fine and beautiful. You may be called upon today to advise others. An appreciation for authority and your elders, makes you welcome at any social scene. It is easy for you to work with those in authority-those older and more experienced than you. This is a good time for decision making.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will find yourself giving way to others today. Your ability to manage and supervise people and things, plus a built-in sense of responsibility, makes you a unique character. Do not underplay your creative abilities. Organizing and administering people and projects will become central to your profession and possibly your leisure time as well. This could involve the wide field of entertainment, or signing up speakers for the town's convention center. There are not many people of your caliber out there when it comes to expressing the joy of life and showing others where they could be expressive. Others may find it very difficult to imagine you might need love and attention. This evening is a good time to express love and receive love.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A co-worker has a lot to say and you are willing to listen. The questions from this co-worker will move you into a direction of research. You will be successful in finding just what is needed to be in a better position for the job that is desired. Later today, your attention moves to real estate. There are opportunities to find just the right house for your family. You pursue responsibilities the way others pursue pleasure and you even invite the responsibilities to multiply. Moving into a home after being in an apartment for a long time will actually be a comfortable transaction. You are very bearish when it comes to security and you seldom make a move that does not strengthen your position. You can sometimes wait too long to make important changes.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your drive and emotions take conservative, well-traveled paths, carefully avoiding the new and different. At times, you may have trouble feeling spontaneous and become too dependent on others. Today is the best day this month to practice stretching outside your comfort zone. A request from a co-worker friend to sign up for a future academic class will set off questions in your mind. You might consider that taking the class would show an interest in keeping up your skills and perhaps updating some techniques. You will be able to fit one class easily into your daily routine. Higher education or philosophical/religious contacts could have a part in making good things happen. Your regular exercise through sports should continue.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your mind works very quickly when it comes to making career and management decisions. You are beginning to be proficient in detection of a problem before it becomes a crisis. You have a relentless drive to get at the heart of any problem. This relentless pursuit of anything hidden makes you a good researcher or investigator. Your dreams of new ways to invest may help you create a unique investment package or ideas for yourself as well as others to make money and to prosper. You may feel like escaping into the world of imagination and daydreams this afternoon. A little gym workout and then the trip home will help you transition from work to a family gathering. Someone brings good news and you could be included in the next ceremony.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You look forward to working with people in authority today-those older and more experienced than you. You enjoy working with others and you are able to organize and handle matters as they arise. Interestingly enough a child may choose this day to rebel. Perhaps you can use your experiences to teach and empathize with this young person. A sibling or mate is on a health kick but you are also interested in a better health regimen. Health goals take on importance. An interest and ability in athletics, exercise, working with the physical body, the outdoors, etc., should be lifelong but you can get lazy here. Make every effort to get into a dance class or a regular routine of exercise. Keeping each of you will be benefit from your contribution.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may be a bit unpredictable these days. Your drive for independence is obvious-clearly the common and the traditional are not for you. You pursue alternative or nonconformist solutions to life with great energy. You are aggressive in the pursuit of gaining insight into all that is new, different and out of the ordinary. You are a trendsetter and perhaps an inventor. Electronics, computers and communications could be a big part of your life. This is a time to take risks and dare to be a little unconventional. You have an idea of how to improve on someone else's hard work; write the inventor and share your ideas. Make your move now. Opportunities here could open up by taking the road less traveled by, daring to be different, taking new approaches.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This could be a good time to create a more flexible you. When you experience interruptions, consider it a chance to gain a helper or to guide and help others. Now would be a good time to take a deep breath and stop what you are doing for fifteen or twenty minutes. Tell a joke, hear a joke, smile, walk-breathe in some fresh air. You will be ready to return to whatever project you were involved with and have a deeper and more positive frame of mind. You have a drive to complete projects before any deadline was ever considered, so you will have an opportunity to relax a little from time to time. Slow the tempo this afternoon and have a little fun, perhaps teaching a friend to whistle. There are young ones in your life that look forward to your hugs.

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

01:15 Forbidden Empire
03:15 The Throwaways
05:00 DCU: Justice League vs Teen Titans
06:30 The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
08:30 Spooks: The Greater Good
10:15 Die Hard
12:30 Life On The Line
14:15 The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
16:15 Spooks: The Greater Good
18:00 Escape
19:30 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation
21:45 Mad Max: Fury Road
23:45 Star Wars: The Force Awakens

04:20 Tom And Huck
05:55 The Hunchback Of Notre Dame II
07:10 Tarzan
08:40 Frozen
10:20 Tinker Bell And The Lost Treasure
11:40 Atlantis: The Lost Empire
13:15 Frozen
15:00 Home On The Range
16:20 Atlantis: Milo's Return
17:45 The Secret Of The Magic Gourd
19:10 High School Musical 3: Senior Year
21:05 Home On The Range
22:25 The Secret Of The Magic Gourd
23:50 High School Musical 3: Senior Year

05:30 The Golden Child
07:15 Valentine's Day
09:30 Overboard
11:30 The Golden Child
13:00 Valentine's Day
15:00 Mr. Popper's Penguins
16:45 Confessions Of A Shopaholic
18:30 With This Ring
20:00 Edtv
22:00 Garden State
23:45 Get Hard

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

00:30 A Perfect Day
02:15 Ed Wood
04:30 Of Mice And Men
06:30 The End Of The Tour
08:15 I'll Follow You Down
10:00 Of Mice And Men
12:00 Ed Wood
14:15 The Sting
16:30 The Help
19:00 Still Alice
20:45 The Lobster
22:45 Almost Famous

OSN MOVIES KIDS

00:00 Albert
01:30 Big Baby
03:00 Get Squirrelly
04:45 Lego: Scooby Doo Haunted Hollywood
06:15 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
08:00 Frog Kingdom
09:45 Izzie's Way Home
11:15 Albert
12:45 Big Baby

14:15 Bee Movie
16:00 Izzie's Way Home
17:30 Pooh's Heffalump Movie
18:45 Ratchet And Clank
20:30 Bee Movie
22:15 Frog Kingdom
23:45 Pooh's Heffalump Movie

OSN MOVIES HD

00:30 Steve Jobs
02:30 Ghostbusters II
04:30 Seventh Son
06:15 Gulliver's Travels
08:00 Steve Jobs
10:00 Paddington
11:45 X-Men: First Class
14:00 Unstoppable
15:45 The Bucket List
17:30 The Intern
19:30 The Walk
21:45 Inception

SUNDANCE TV

01:10 Nola
02:50 Iconoclasts
03:50 Welcome To Happiness
05:40 The Kitchen
07:00 Bourek
08:30 Krishna
09:50 Hopscotch
11:35 Cathedrals Of Culture
12:05 Desert Cathedral
13:30 Body Of War
15:00 Bloody Beans
16:30 Gored
17:45 Adonis
18:00 Mikey And Nicky
19:40 Desert Cathedral
21:00 Movie Talk Legends: Anthony Quinn
21:30 Hollywood's Best Film Directors
22:00 Man Of The Year
23:35 World's Greatest Dad

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

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 Impractical Jokers
00:30 Impractical Jokers
00:55 Impractical Jokers
01:20 Impractical Jokers
01:45 Lip Sync Battle
02:10 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Hungry Investors
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
11:46 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 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
16:55 Tattoo Disasters
17:25 Tattoo Disasters
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 Live At The Apollo
22:55 Todd Barry: Super Crazy
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

food network

00:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
00:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
01:00 Private Chef
01:30 Private Chef
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30 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: Fast Feasts
09:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
10:00 Bake With Anna Olson
10:30 Bake With Anna Olson
11:00 The Kitchen
12:00 The Pioneer Woman
12:30 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
13:30 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 Bake With Anna Olson
17:30 Bake With Anna Olson
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Guy's Grocery Games
20:00 Paul Hollywood - City Bakes
21:00 Reza's African Kitchen
21:30 Reza's African Kitchen
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped

OSN SERIES HD COMEDY

00:15 The Middle
00:40 The Middle
01:05 Kevin Can Wait
01:30 Kevin Can Wait
01:55 The Mindy Project
02:20 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
03:10 Late Night With Seth Meyers
04:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
04:50 The Bill Engvall Show
05:15 Malibu Country
05:40 American Housewife
06:05 The Mick
06:30 The Bernie Mac Show

06:55 The Mindy Project
07:20 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:10 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
09:50 The Bill Engvall Show
10:15 Malibu Country
10:40 The Bernie Mac Show
11:05 Kevin Can Wait
11:30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:20 Seinfeld
12:45 Seinfeld
13:10 The Middle
13:35 The Middle
14:00 The Bill Engvall Show
14:25 Malibu Country
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 The Mindy Project
23:25 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN SERIES HD FIRST

00:40 The Americans
01:30 Beyond
02:20 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
03:20 Supergirl
04:10 Drop Dead Diva
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 The View
07:45 The Chew
08:30 Riverdale
09:20 Supergirl
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 Drop Dead Diva
17:00 Supergirl
18:00 The Blacklist
19:00 Time After Time
20:00 Suits
21:00 Emerald City
22:00 Eyewitness
23:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
23:50 The Blacklist

OSN FIRST HD Home of HBO

00:25 Unscripted
00:55 Unscripted
01:25 Lucifer
02:10 The Alzheimer's Project
03:00 Veep
03:30 Silicon Valley
04:00 LifeStories: Families In Crisis
04:30 Larry David: Curb Your Enthusiasm
05:35 The Wizard Of Lies
07:50 Prom Night In Mississippi
09:20 Winchell
11:10 The Gathering Storm
12:45 Into The Storm
14:25 Meet The Donors: Does Money Talk
15:30 61*
17:40 Class Divide
19:00 Big Little Lies
20:00 Chance
21:00 Lucifer
22:00 Mildred Pierce
23:05 LifeStories: Families In Crisis
23:40 Big Little Lies

OSN SERIES HD

00:00 Beyond
01:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
01:50 The Blacklist



X-MEN-FIRST-CLASS ON OSN MOVIES HD

FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 2017

- 02:40 The Americans
- 03:30 Beyond
- 04:20 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
- 05:20 Supergirl
- 06:10 Drop Dead Diva
- 07:00 Good Morning America
- 09:00 The View
- 09:45 The Chew
- 10:30 The Americans
- 11:20 Supergirl
- 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 Drop Dead Diva
- 19:00 Supergirl
- 20:00 The Blacklist
- 21:00 House Of Cards
- 22:00 House Of Cards
- 22:55 House Of Cards
- 23:50 House Of Cards



- 00:45 Killjoys
- 01:35 Killjoys
- 02:25 Stargate SG-1
- 03:20 Sanctuary
- 04:15 Eureka
- 05:05 Smallville
- 06:00 Sanctuary
- 06:55 Sanctuary
- 07:45 Sanctuary
- 08:40 Pokemon IV: 4Ever
- 10:00 Dark Matter
- 10:55 Dark Matter
- 11:50 Dark Matter
- 12:45 Dark Matter
- 13:40 Dark Matter
- 14:35 Dark Matter
- 15:30 The Host
- 17:40 Red Faction: Origins
- 19:20 Killjoys
- 20:10 Killjoys
- 21:00 King Kong



- 00:00 House Of DVF
- 02:00 Cougar Town
- 05:00 Fashion Star
- 06:00 Gallery Girls
- 08:00 House Of DVF
- 10:00 Cougar Town
- 13:00 Fashion Star
- 14:00 Gallery Girls
- 16:00 Desperate Housewives
- 17:00 Desperate Housewives
- 18:00 American Idol
- 21:00 Desperate Housewives
- 23:00 Gallery Girls



- 00:20 Oprah's LifeClass
- 01:10 Promzillas
- 02:00 Cake Boss
- 02:25 Cake Boss
- 02:50 Say Yes To The Dress
- 03:15 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
- 20:10 Cake Boss
- 20:35 Cake Boss
- 21:00 Kate Plus 8
- 21:50 Separated At Birth
- 22:40 Cake Boss
- 23:05 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



INCEPTION ON OSN 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



- Crime & Investigation Network
- 00:00 The First 48
- 01:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
- 02:00 Homicide Hunter
- 03:00 Cold Case Files
- 04:00 The First 48
- 05:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
- 06:00 My Crazy Ex
- 07:00 My Crazy Ex
- 08:00 Evil Up Close
- 09:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 10:00 Homicide Hunter
- 11:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 12:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 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
- 10:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 11:00 The Universe
- 12:00 Ultimate Guide To The

- Presidents
- 13:00 Weapons At War
- 14:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 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
- 17:23 Kit 'n' Kate
- 17:30 Barney And Friends
- 17:58 Chuck And Friends
- 18:20 Bali
- 18:34 Pound Puppies

Word Search Puzzles

Songs With Girls' Names

Find and circle all of these songs that have a girls name in the title. The remaining letters spell an additional song title.

DBARBARRAANNLEASNC
YINULUCILLENTWOML
AAAOSUSIEQNIIESARA
RCDNNYYEIAKEIDGMI
INNSANUDEITLGELEYR
VNATESAINCAIALOSO
LAMHYURIAAETILRHX
EEADBCRTRHMMTLIAA
EJGOAAOYARJLIHARN
EEOCHLNYBOSECCKON
PIYLISSDAUIJEIHNE
LLGNEUHNIRRECMAS
ALENZNEKYDNARBLWH
YIIAAAEKRTANADIAE
LBNHYBGIRRONAELE
ANNASORDIAIHTEBR
EMONNWADATLEDDSY

- | | | |
|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| ADDA | DEANA | HY SHARONA |
| ALISON | ELEANOR RIGBY | NIKITA |
| AMANDA | ELVIRA | OH SHERRIE |
| ANGIE | GLORIA | PEGGY SUE |
| BARBARA ANN | JOANNA | RHSANNON |
| BETH | JOLENE | ROSANNA |
| BILLIE JEAN | KYRIE | ROXANNE |
| BRANDY | LAYLA | RUBY TUESDAY |
| CANDIDA | LITTLE JEANNIE | SARA |
| CARRIE ANNE | LUCILLE | SHERRY |
| CECILIA | MAGGIE MAY | SUSIE Q |
| CLAIR | MANDY | SUZANNE |
| DELLAH | MICHELLE | SWEET CAROLINE |
| DELTA DAWN | | |

CROSSWORD 1647



ACROSS

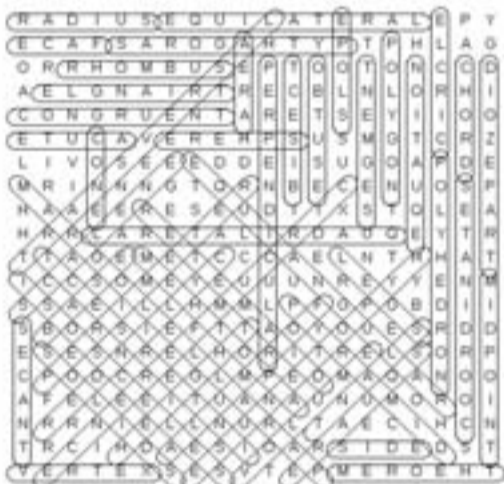
- (computer science) A computer that is running software that allows users to leave messages and access information of general interest.
- Causing fear or anxiety by threatening great harm.
- A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
- 10 hao equal 1 dong.
- French inventor of the first practical photographic process, the daguerreotype (1789-1851).
- A decree that prohibits something.
- Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
- Long pinkish sour leafstalks usually eaten cooked and sweetened.
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
- German tennis player who won seven women's singles titles at Wimbledon (born in 1969).
- (British) Your grandmother.
- A linguistic element added to a word to produce an inflected or derived form v 1.
- A native or inhabitant of Vietnam.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- Having help.
- A branch of the Tai languages.
- Wild ginger.
- A defeat of the Persian army by the Greeks in 479 BC.
- The compass point that is one point north of due east.
- Offering fun and gaiety.
- An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
- Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
- Lacking or deprive of the sense of hearing wholly or in part.
- Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.
- God of fire.
- A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- English tennis player who won may women's singles titles (born in 1945).
- A cloth used as a head covering (and veil and shawl) by Muslim and Hindu women.

DOWN

- God of wealth and love.
- (in Scotland) A child.
- Very large white gannet with black wing tips.
- Measure of the US economy adopted in 1991.
- The amount a salary is increased.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- Passing or able to pass air in and out of the lungs normally.
- A sails-shaped constellation in the southern hemisphere near Carina.
- Similar to the color of a ripe orange.
- A large vase that usually has a pedestal or feet.
- Stalk of a moss capsule.
- At or near or toward the stern of a ship or tail of an airplane.
- Bushy plant of Old World salt marshes and sea beaches having prickly leaves.
- A powerful operating system developed at the Bell Telephone Laboratories.
- A Muslim or Hindu mendicant monk who is regarded as a holy man.
- A distinct feature or element in a problem.
- An enclosed space.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- Diabetes caused by a relative or absolute deficiency of insulin and characterized by polyuria.
- Any of numerous pale-colored butterflies having three pairs of well-developed legs.
- An authoritative person who divines the future.
- A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
- A language group of the Hokan family.
- A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- City in eastern Belgium.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- Set down according to a plan.
- The condition of having no arms.
- Adopted in order to deceive.
- A building used to house military personnel v 1.
- The compass point that is one point west of northwest.
- Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
- An ugly evil-looking old woman.
- Monotypic genus of palms of Australasia.
- A small piece of anything (especially a piece that has been snipped off).
- Distant in either space or time.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- Suggestive of the supernatural.
- An insecticide that is also toxic to animals and humans.
- Half the width of an em.

Yesterday's Solution

Geometry



- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| ACUTE | EQUATION | PERIMETER | SIDE |
| APOTHEM | EQUANGULAR | PERPENDICULAR | SLANT |
| AREA | EQUILATERAL | POLYGON | SLOPE |
| BASE | FACE | POLYHEDRON | SOLIDS |
| BISECT | FORMULA | PYRAMID | SPHERE |
| CHORD | HIGHT | PYTHAGORAS | SQUARE |
| CIRCLE | HYPOTENUSE | QUADRILATERAL | THEOREM |
| CIRCUMFERENCE | INTERSECT | RADIUS | TRANSVERSAL |
| CONE | INTERSECT | RHOMBUS | TRANSPOSED |
| CONGRUENT | LEGS | SCALENE | TRIANGLE |
| COORDINATES | MIDPOINT | SEGANT | VERTEX |
| CYLINDER | OBTUSE | SEGMENT | VOLUME |
| DIAPETER | PARALLELOGRAM | | |

Hidden sentence: PYTHAGORAS LIVED DURING THE SIXTH CENTURY BEFORE CHRIST

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Yesterday's Solution



STUDY LINKS AT-RISK ORCAS' FAILED PREGNANCIES TO SCARCE FOOD

SEATTLE: Endangered killer whales that frequent the inland waters of Washington state are having pregnancy problems because they cannot find enough fish to eat, according to a new study. Researchers analyzed hormones in excrement collected at sea and found that more than two-thirds of orca pregnancies failed over a seven-year period. They linked those problems to nutritional stress brought on by a low supply of Chinook salmon, the whales' preferred diet.

"A large number of whales are conceiving, but when nutrition is poor, they don't sustain those pregnancies," said Sam Wasser, lead author of the paper and a biology professor at the University of Washington. Southern resident killer whales along the U.S. West Coast have struggled since they were listed as endangered species in 2005. They now number just 78, down from a high of 140 decades ago. The whales face threats from a lack of food, pollution and boats.

The new study, to be published yesterday in the journal PLOS ONE, zeroes in on food supply as an important stress factor among these fish-eating whales. Unlike other killer whales that eat marine mammals, the orcas that spend the summer in Puget Sound primarily eat salmon, mostly Chinook. Many species of Chinook salmon along West Coast are listed as threatened or endangered due to a host of factors, including loss of habitat from urban development, dams, fishing, pollution and competition from non-native fish.

Toxins that accumulate in the whales' fat and are released when the animals starve and metabolize that fat also play a role in the pregnancy problems. "Food is the driver. But what we can't yet say is how much of that then is affected by its interaction by toxins," Wasser said, adding that there were not enough samples to say how influential the toxins are. Using dogs trained to sniff out whale poop, a team of scientists collected nearly 350 excrement samples from 79 unique whales in inland waters of British Columbia and Washington state between 2008 and 2014.

Back in the lab, they analyzed it for the hormones progesterone and testosterone and assessed whether the orca was pregnant and at what stage. They also used DNA to determine the identity, sex and family line of the whale. A pregnancy was deemed successful if the female whale was later observed with her calf. —AP



CAMBODIA: This handout photo released by the Wildlife Conservation Society shows a nest with 19 eggs of world's critically endangered Siamese Crocodile along a river in Koh Kong province. —AFP

RARE SIAMESE CROCODILE EGGS FOUND IN CAMBODIA

PHNOM PENH: Conservationists in Cambodia have found a nest with 19 eggs from one of the world's most endangered crocodiles, boosting hopes for a rare species threatened by poachers and habitat loss. The clutch of fist-sized eggs was discovered this week by environmental officers and local villagers near a pond in southwestern Koh Kong province, according to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), which assisted with the discovery.

The group had been searching for tracks, dung and other signs of wild Siamese Crocodiles, a species whose population has plummeted at an alarming rate in recent years. Researchers

believe only 400 adults still exist in the wild, mostly in Cambodia. Their survival is threatened by poachers who supply eggs and adult reptiles to crocodile farms around the region, where their skins are turned into luxury belts, shoes and handbags.

"To avoid any threats, we moved the eggs to a safe place to hatch and track their progress," In Hul, from Cambodia's Fisheries Administration, said in a statement Wednesday. After the eggs hatch, the baby crocodiles will be raised at a conservation centre until they are mature enough to be released into the wild, Eng Mengey of WCS, said. WCS said it was the first Siamese Crocodile

nest found in the Sre Ambel river system during six years of research.

Earlier this year the group found a nest in the same river system belonging to Cambodia's Royal Turtle, an uplifting discovery for another reptile on the brink of extinction. Deforestation and poaching have devastated many species in Cambodia, one of Asia's poorest and most corrupt nations. In its haste to develop, the government has been criticized for allowing firms to clear hundreds of thousands of hectares of forest land-including in protected zones-for everything from rubber and sugar cane plantations to hydropower dams.—AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 2017



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page
(www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Friday 30/6/2017				Departure Flights on Friday 30/6/2017			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
UAE	2555	Dubai	00:05	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10	MSC	416	Sohag	11:15
JZR	513	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:15	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
KAC	786	Jeddah	00:30	SAW	704	Damascus	11:45
JZR	267	Beirut	00:35	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
PIA	205	Lahore	00:40	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:05
KAC	102	London	00:55	JZR	176	Dubai	13:10
DLH	635	Doha	01:00	JZR	124	Bahrain	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	MSC	404	Asyut	13:45
JZR	539	Cairo	01:20	THY	767	Istanbul	13:45
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	FEG	932	Alexandria	13:55
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:45	SYR	342	Dubai	14:15
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	234	Riyadh	14:50
KKK	6506	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
MEA	410	Beirut	02:00	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:05	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:05	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JAD	302	Amman	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	JZR	188	Dubai	15:50
THY	768	Istanbul	02:35	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:55
MEA	406	Beirut	02:50	KAC	743	Dammam	16:00
KAC	418	Manila	02:50	KAC	619	Doha	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	OMA	646	Muscat	16:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
RJA	644	Amman	03:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:30
FDB	069	Dubai	03:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:40
KAC	382	Delhi	03:15	SAW	706	Damascus	16:50
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	RJA	641	Amman	16:55
THY	3900	Istanbul	03:35	KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:40	FDB	052	Dubai	17:05
CEB	018	Manila	04:00	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
QTR	1090	Doha	04:05	JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
JZR	555	Alexandria	04:05	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
UAE	873	Dubai	04:15	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:25
THY	6534	Istanbul	04:15	JZR	240	Amman	17:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:20	KAC	357	Kochi	17:40
KAC	358	Kochi	04:50	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
FEG	931	Alexandria	05:00	JZR	564	Sohag	17:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:00	NIA	362	Alexandria	17:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:05	KAC	381	Delhi	17:50
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	ADB	2129	ISU	18:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
BAW	157	London	06:05	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	414	Bangkok	06:10	JZR	184	Dubai	18:25
KAC	204	Lahore	06:20	JZR	538	Cairo	18:30
KAC	1802	Cairo	06:35	KAC	775	Riyadh	18:35
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	18:45
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	QTR	1081	Doha	19:15
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:55	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	19:20
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	JZR	552	Alexandria	19:20
KAC	156	Istanbul	07:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
RJA	5578	Amman	07:05	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
JZR	1541	Cairo	07:10	FDB	064	Dubai	19:50
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
KAC	354	Bangalore	07:50	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	331	Trivandrum	20:35
FEG	1935	Sohag	08:00	DLH	634	Doha	21:00
JZR	1543	Cairo	08:20	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
JZR	557	Alexandria	08:50	KAC	543	Cairo	21:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:40
IRA	675	Lar	09:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	203	Lahore	21:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	SVA	501	Jeddah	21:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	205	Islamabad	21:55
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	AL	K230	Colombo	22:20
SAW	703	Damascus	10:45	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:25
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:05	KAC	383	Delhi	22:35
JZR	561	Sohag	11:10	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
KAC	614	Bahrain	11:15	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:00
KAC	742	Dammam	11:45	JZR	528	Asyut	23:05
JZR	165	Dubai	11:50	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:10
JZR	239	Amman	12:25	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
MSC	403	Asyut	12:45	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:35
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	RBG	552	Alexandria	23:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	12:45				
THY	766	Istanbul	12:50				
FEG	953	Asyut	12:55				
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00				
SYR	341	Damascus	13:00				
KAC	672	Dubai	13:55				
KAC	792	Madinah	13:55				
QTR	1078	Doha	14:05				
KNE	233	Riyadh	14:10				
KAC	364	Colombo	14:15				
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15				
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20				
KAC	618	Doha	14:20				
JZR	903	GYD	14:25				
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:55				
KAC	304	Mumbai	14:55				
KAC	692	Muscat	14:55				
JAD	301	Amman	15:00				
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:05				
OMA	645	Muscat	15:10				
ADB	214F	RKT	15:10				
KAC	562	Amman	15:25				
KAC	502	Beirut	15:25				
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35				
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45				
SAW	705	Damascus	15:50				
RJA	640	Amman	16:00				
FDB	051	Dubai	16:15				
QTR	1072	Doha	16:15				
JZR	257	Beirut	16:20				
JZR	535	Cairo	16:20				
JZR	125	Bahrain	16:25				
KAC	118	New York	16:25				
NIA	361	Alexandria	16:50				
KAC	542	Cairo	17:05				
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15				
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30				
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:35				
JZR	177	Dubai	17:45				
QTR	1080	Doha	18:05				
JZR	483	Istanbul	18:30				
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30				
UAE	875	Dubai	19:05				
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05				
KAC	744	Dammam	19:05				
FDB	063	Dubai	19:10				
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:20				
KAC	154	Istanbul	19:30				
KAC	674	Dubai	19:40				
KAC	616	Bahrain	19:40				
KAC	620	Doha	19:50				
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50				
KAC	104	London	20:00				
OMA	647	Muscat	20:05				
MEA	402	Beirut	20:15				
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:15				
KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	20:20				
JZR	189	Dubai	20:25				
SVA	500	Jeddah	20:35				
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35				
KAC	166	Rome	20:55				
KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:05				
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10				
KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:15				
ALK	229	Colombo	21:15				
UAE	859	Dubai	21:15				
KAC	676	Dubai	21:35				
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50				
KAC	564	Amman	22:00				
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00				
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:10				
KAC	162	Geneva	22:25				
AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25				
BBC	143	Dhaka	22:30				
KAC	776	Riyadh	22:45				
JZR	241	Amman	22:55				
JZR	185	Dubai	23:00				
RBG	551	Alexandria	23:00				
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00				
MSR	2614	Cairo	23:30				
FDB	071	Dubai	23:35				
PIA	239	Sialkot	23:40				
THY	764	Istanbul	23:45				
AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05				
JZR	1540	Cairo	00:20				
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30				
MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30				
FDB	072	Dubai	00:30				
MSC	502	Alexandria	01:05				
JZR	502	Luxor	01:15				
UAE	2556	Dubai	01:30				
JZR	1542	Cairo	01:30				
THY	773	Istanbul	01:40				
PIA	206	Lahore	01:40				
SAW	714	Damascus	01:55				
KAC	363	Colombo	01:55				
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:00				
JZR	556	Alexandria	02:05				
KAC	677	Dubai	02:15				
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:35				
MSR	619	Alexandria	02:35				
THY	765	Istanbul	02:50				
MEA	411	Beirut	02:55				
KKK	6505	Istanbul	02:55				
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05				
UAE	854	Dubai	03:30				
KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:30				
THY	769	Istanbul	03:30				
MEA	407	Beirut	03:50				
RJA	645	Amman	03:55				
OMA	644	Muscat	04:05				
QTR	1087	Doha	04:10				
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10				
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15				
KAC	417	Manila	04:20				
PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25				
JZR	560	Sohag	04:45				
KAC	103	London	05:00				
QTR	1091	Doha	05:05				
CEB	019	Manila	05:30				
QTR	1077	Doha	05:35				
THY	6534	Dhaka/Istanbul	05:45				
KAC</							

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SILICON-ON-SEINE: WORLD'S BIGGEST TECH INCUBATOR OPENS IN PARIS

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True romance in the air at Tokyo virtual reality show



NEW DELHI: This file photo shows Air India planes preparing for take-off at Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi.—AFP

INDIA EYES SALE OF ITS DEBT-LADEN AIRLINE

AIR INDIA'S SALE SIGNALS THE POSSIBILITY OF NEW INDIA

NEW DELHI: New Delhi is hoping to privatize Air India to make the ailing national carrier more competitive, but experts say debts of at least \$8 billion could deter buyers. India's finance minister said on Wednesday the government had approved a plan to sell a stake in Air India, which has long struggled to compete with privately-owned rivals. India has the world's fastest-growing passenger airline industry, expanding at an annual rate of around 20 percent and the sector holds vast untapped potential.

But its loss-making state airline is plagued by a reputation for delays, cancellations and poor service. Efforts to privatize the airline—a huge drain on state coffers—have foundered in the past and experts said the government would have no choice but to write off the debt if it was

to attract a buyer. "Who's going to take the risk of buying a loss-making airline and with a mountain of debt?" said Dhiraj Mathur, a partner with the consultancy PwC specializing in aviation.

Others said the current right-wing administration, India's first one-party government in 30 years which touts itself as business-friendly, was well-placed to achieve a sale. "To write off \$9 billion of taxpayers' money is not easy, but if anyone can do it, it's this government," said Kapil Kaul, South Asia chief executive of the Centre for Aviation, a consultancy. "When Air India gets sold, it signals to the global investor that the new India is real and possible."

Maharaja of the Skies

The other major obstacle is the unions

representing Air India's staff, which has fiercely opposed a sale. Nonetheless the country's largest airline IndiGo has already expressed an interest in Air India, a government official told reporters yesterday. The Tata Group, an Indian conglomerate that owned Air India before the carrier was nationalized nearly 70 years ago, has also been touted as a possible purchaser. But a tweet from Anand Mahindra, the Indian billionaire who heads the Mahindra Group conglomerate, underscored the challenges facing the government in finding a buyer.

"I see myself as a generally courageous person. But I confess I don't possess THAT much courage," he tweeted.

The airline — known as the "Maharaja of the Skies" for its turbaned mascot—may not be winning in the reputation stakes.

But Amber Dubey, partner and India head of aerospace and defense at global consultancy KPMG, said its large fleet and significant market share could make it an attractive proposition—if the debt was written off.

"It's a one-time deal wherein the winner takes all and others may take years to catch up," he said. Air India has its roots in the private sector. It was set up by Tata Sons in 1932 and acquired by the Indian government in 1953. Its problems can be blamed on a combination of poor decisions, a lack of a consistent leadership and political interference—including frequent demands from politicians for new routes to their constituencies. "This is a tough call for the government, but if it can do a once-for-all clean-up and not look back, it can expect significant interest in the airline," Kaul said.—AFP

EGYPT SLASHES FUEL SUBSIDIES IN IMF-BACKED REFORM

CAIRO: Egypt announced a new sharp increase in fuel prices yesterday, as it slashes government subsidies in a tough IMF-backed reform program. The cabinet said that 82 octane petrol would sell for 3.65 pounds a liter up from 2.35, with the same increase for diesel, while 92 octane petrol rose from 3.5 to 5.0 pounds. The government first increased fuel prices in 2014 and again in November last year after floating the pound. Prime Minister Sharif Ismail said the fuel subsidies were straining government financing.

The projection for next year at the same levels "is 150 billion pounds. This is a big number that neither the oil sector nor the budget can handle," he said in a press conference. The government plans to provide "less subsidies for fuel and to divert it to other sectors" such as development, he added. The country had spent billions of dollars propping up the pound, which rose from 8.9 pounds to the dollar to 18 after its flotation. Investors and international lenders have applauded the reforms but the measures have fuelled inflation, which now hovers around 30 percent. Last year, the International Monetary Fund approved a \$12 billion loan to Egypt to be disbursed over three years to help finance the reforms.—AFP

EURO EXTENDS RUN HIGHER WITH 13-MONTH DOLLAR HIGH

LONDON: The euro led a broad advance in currencies against the greenback yesterday after a string of central bankers hinted at an end to loose monetary policies that have been in place since the financial crisis. The single currency powered to a 13-month high Thursday, building on Wednesday's 12-month peak after European Central Bank boss Mario Draghi offered a more positive economic outlook for the eurozone than expected, with traders brushing off later attempts by his officials to play down his remarks.

The euro jumped Thursday to \$1.1435 — the highest level since May 2016 — as markets bet the ECB, finally seeing a recovery in the eurozone economy after years of weakness, will soon begin winding down its stimulus. Against the Japanese currency, the euro reached a 16-month peak at 128.79 yen. Most European stock markets were meanwhile lower heading into the half-way stage. "The pound and euro's central bank-driven gains remained the focus of trading this yesterday," said Connor Campbell, an analyst at Spreadex.

The outlook from the ECB comes as several central bank bosses have this week hinted at tightening policies put in place to combat the hammering that the global economy took from the financial crisis that started around a decade ago. Sterling powered higher Wednesday after Bank of England chief Mark Carney hinted at a rate hike, which took dealers by surprise and distracted them from British political uncertainty caused by the recent UK general election and Brexit.

Similar comments from the head of Canada's central bank provided a boost to the country's dollar, while rising commodity prices and talk of an Australian rate lift supported the Aussie. Asian currencies benefited also from the broad dollar weakness, which comes as US President Donald Trump's economy-boosting agenda looks on the ropes as he struggles to push through crucial health care reform.—AFP



TOKYO: A man uses a mobile phone in front of an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo.—AP



ATHENS: A woman walks next a pile of trash as a sign on the wall reads in Greek 'No garbage' in the Kaminia neighborhood of Piraeus, near Athens.—AP

RUBBISH PILES UP AS GREEK MUNICIPAL WORKERS STRIKE

WORKERS DEMAND RENEWAL OF CONTRACT

ATHENS: Ever-mounting piles of rubbish were festering in the streets of Greek cities yesterday as municipal workers staged a second strike in a week in solidarity with refuse workers embroiled in a contract dispute. Refuse collectors demanding the renewal of their work contracts have been off the job for the past ten days, leaving mounds of trash to pile up in soaring temperatures in Athens and several other cities. More than 1,000 people descended on central Athens to attend a demonstration called by a municipal workers' union, according to police, who were expecting the protest to grow in advance of an afternoon rally outside parliament. A rally last Thursday to protest Greece's economic woes drew a crowd of some 5,000. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras meanwhile received a union delegation, promising to extend the refuse collectors' contracts and to ensure new hiring would be on an open-ended basis.

"Even so, the union decided not to suspend their action," government spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos regretted, while accusing the main opposition New Democracy party of being behind the strike. "It is clear the goal of the strike is no longer to defend the interests of contract workers," but "to deal a blow to the government, the victims being the public, the workers themselves and public health," Tzanakopoulos added.

The executive committee of the union, which says 6,500 workers risk having short-term contracts expires, was due to meet later yesterday to discuss whether to continue its strike at the height of the tourist season. Amid

seething popular discontent against austerity measures imposed by international creditors, waste management has become a recurring source of contention in Greece, where a recruitment freeze means many workers are only being offered temporary contracts. Last

week as rubbish piled up across the city, Athens municipal authorities urged residents not to take out their waste as temperatures soared. The weather will provide no immediate respite with this weekend set to see a heat wave as the thermometer hits 44 degrees Celsius.—AFP

US CAR SALES STILL STRONG, SHIFTING TO USED VEHICLES

DETROIT: While new car sales have slipped from 2016, robust demand for used vehicles means US car dealerships will still see strong sales this year, industry analysts said Wednesday. Jonathan Smoke, the chief economist for Cox Automotive, said the data already indicate the shift to more used vehicles is well underway. "Dealers are selling more vehicles but the mix is changing and shifting from new to used," he said.

Rebecca Lindland, executive analyst for Kelley Blue Book, said that shift is being driven largely by buyers under the age of 40, who now account for 29 percent of all vehicles sold in the United States and are much more likely to purchase a used vehicle. "Affordability is a big issue for millennial buyers," she said. New vehicles sales remain relatively strong but have slipped from their 2016 peak of 17.5 million vehicles, said Charles Chesbrough, Cox Automotive's senior director of industry insights. "It's hard to say the industry is near collapse, barring a recession or some kind of financial

event," he said. Smoke said the strong sales of new cars and trucks in recent years, especially the SUVs beloved by American drivers, and spurred by incentives and discounts, mean the supply of appealing used vehicles has increased. Dealers are also willing to pay more for used vehicles to insure they have an adequate supply, he said. In addition, a significant number of leased vehicles are returning to the market as low mileage, relatively-new used vehicles, attractive to consumers.

According to Cox Automotive data, 3.6 million lease vehicles will return to the market in 2017, up from 3.0 million in 2016. By 2020, 4.6 million off-lease vehicles will return to the market. These off-lease vehicles are rapidly becoming an affordable, appealing alternative to new. More are on the way. "Overall, despite slowing new-vehicle sales, we think the automotive market is healthy," said Smoke. "Sales of approximately 17.1 million will make 2017 among the best years the industry has ever recorded."—AFP

VIETNAM GDP GROWTH SURGES IN 2ND QUARTER

HANOI: Vietnam's economy bounced back in the second quarter posting a 6.17 percent growth rate, according to official figures yesterday, a boost driven by gains in the industrial and services sectors. The export-driven economy saw growth slow last year as the country struggled to recover from a major drought and mass fish kill along its central coast. Growth in the first three months of this year hit a three-year low of 5.15 percent

thanks to a slump in exports from Samsung, the country's leading investor.

But GDP growth rates from April to June jumped to 6.17 percent, according to the General Statistics Office (GSO). The surge was driven by growth in the industrial and services sectors, though the mining sector dragged growth slightly, the office said. GSO general director Nguyen Bich Lam said the surge between quarter one and two was the biggest

jump since 2011, according to state-controlled Vietnamnet news site.

Analysts were buoyed by the bounce back and predicted strong growth ahead—even if the official growth target of 6.7 percent is not met. "The latest numbers are very positive... I think Vietnam can manage about 6.5 percent growth this year," said Luong Hoang from Viet Capital Securities. Communist Vietnam has enjoyed a reputation as one of the best per-

forming economies in Southeast Asia in recent years, with growth hitting more than six percent over the past two years, though the 2016 figures were down from the previous year.

Overall growth for the first half of 2017 is at 5.73 percent, up from the same period last year as exports surged 18.9 percent compared to the first half of 2016. Growth has been mostly driven by exports of cheaply made goods, from Nike shoes to smartphones.—AFP

GLOBAL COMPANIES PLEDGE TRANSPARENCY ON CLIMATE RISK

PARIS: Multinationals worth \$3.5 trillion and financial institutions managing \$25 trillion in assets pledged yesterday to follow new guidelines for disclosing exposure to climate change risk in both operations and investments. Spearheaded by former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg, recommendations by the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures should help shareholders determine if businesses are aligned with the global shift toward a low-carbon economy, and not unduly burdened with assets that could be stranded during that transition.

"Climate change present global markets with risks and opportunities that cannot be ignored, which is why a framework around climate-related disclosures is so important," Bloomberg said in a statement. "The Task Force brings that framework to the table."

Financial and insurance companies whose CEOs have endorsed the recommendations, laid out in a 75-page report, include Bank of America, Barclays, AXA Group, Allianz SE, and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

Industrial powerhouses such as Unilever, Dow Chemical Company, Tata Steel and PepsiCo have also backed the move towards climate transparency, along with the "Big Four" professional services giants, and ratings agencies Moody's and S&P Global. Royal Dutch Shell is, so far, the only oil and gas company to tender its support.

The fossil fuel industry is especially vulnerable to questions about climate risk as the race to decarbonize the world economy gathers pace. A report released earlier this week found that, on average, 30 percent of investments planned by 69 oil and gas majors over the next decade—worth more than \$2 trillion — could be wasted if the world economy retools to cap global warming at two degrees Celsius, researchers warned Wednesday. The 2C target is the cornerstone of the 196-nation Paris Agreement, inked in 2015.

G20 endorsement in doubt

Major energy companies are already under growing pressure from investors to explain how global warming—and the shift to a low-carbon economy—will affect their bottom lines. Last month, three-fifths of ExxonMobil shareholders defied the board and voted for the company to report annually on how new technology and 2C policies will affect business and investment plans. Weeks earlier, a majority of Occidental Petroleum shareholders called for similar measures.

The climate Task Force was set up in December 2015 by the Financial Stability Board (FSB), itself an advisory body established after the 2009 G20 summit to oversee the global financial system.—AFP



CALIFORNIA: In this file photo an oil refinery is seen at sunset in Rodeo, California.—AP



PARIS: A man walks in the world's biggest start-up incubator Station F, formerly known as the Halle Freyssinet in Paris, prior to its inauguration.—AFP

SILICON-ON-SEINE: WORLD'S BIGGEST TECH INCUBATOR OPENS IN PARIS

GLASS HUB AIMS TO CREATE STRONG IMAGE FOR PARIS

PARIS: Paris takes a step closer yesterday to fulfilling its ambition of becoming Europe's technology capital when President Emmanuel Macron inaugurates Station F, the world's largest start-up incubator on the banks of the Seine. The 34,000 square-meter facility which entirely fills an old railway depot is being bankrolled by billionaire Xavier Niel, who revolutionized the French internet and mobile market with his low-cost Free service and is now on a crusade to put French technology on the map.

The cavernous concrete and glass hub, which aims to house up to 1,000 start-ups, will be a "very visible place that creates a strong image for Paris," Niel said. "The idea is to create a place that acts like a beacon and helps others," he added. Station F is situated in the fast-changing 13th district—an airy neighborhood of modern high-rises, shops and cinemas that is home to the national library.

The space has been designed to create the feel of an American college campus, with entrepreneurs paying 195 euros (\$221) a month for a spot in the hub, which is divided into three areas: "create", "share" and "chill". The incubator

is the biggest of around 40 that have sprung up in the French capital, which is competing with London and Berlin for the title of Europe's technology leader. The 39-year-old Macron, who won election at the head of a liberal grassroots movement often likened to a startup, has pledged to promote entrepreneurship and quash perceptions that France is "unfriendly" to business.

Start-up nation

"I want France to be a start-up nation. A nation that thinks and moves like a start-up," he said earlier this month at a tech conference in Paris, where he announced the creation of a 10-billion-euro (\$11.3-billion) fund for innovation. "This is the place to be!", he declared. Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft have already come onboard Station F, to mentor the startups. The entrepreneurs will also partner on-site with top French universities and venture capital funds.

Niel, who launched a no-fees school for computer coders in Paris in 2013 that broke the educational mould, has invested 250 million euros of his own money in Station F. He envisages a day when "people from the world over will come to create their startup in Paris."

Currently, London has the lead in luring international talent. The French are hoping the pendulum will swing across the Channel when Britain leaves the EU.

In the first half of 2016, France squeaked by Britain for the number of start-up financing operations, the EY consultancy found. By the amount raised, however, Britain was far in the lead at 34 percent, with France in second place at 16 percent, although that was still over one billion euros.

French bashing no more

Among those to have received huge capital injections from US investors are BlaBlaCar—valued at over 1.0 billion euros, making it what is known in the tech sector as a "unicorn"—and online advertising firm Criteo. "The dinner table conversation has gone from French bashing to French tech," according to 29-year-old Remy Rousset. Rousset's start-up Wivaldy, which helps consumers control their electricity consumption, is one of the companies that will occupy a berth in Station F. "It's good to be part of an ecosystem, where everyone is in the same mindset and wants to grow very, very fast," he said.—AFP

WORLD BANK RAISES \$500 MN WITH PANDEMIC BONDS

WASHINGTON: The World Bank raised \$500 million to finance rapid response to disease outbreaks, including through sale of its first-ever "pandemic bonds," the bank announced Wednesday. Drawing on the slow response to the 2013 Ebola outbreak in Africa in which thousands died, the World Bank designed the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF), to channel surge funding to developing countries facing the risk of a pandemic.

"With this new facility, we have taken a momentous step that has the potential to save millions of lives and entire economies from one of the greatest systemic threats we face," World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said in a statement. "We are moving away from the cycle of panic and neglect that has characterized so much of our approach to pandemics."

The fund will provide \$500 million over the next five years through a combination of sales of the bonds and derivatives, cash and future commitments from donor countries, the World Bank said in a statement. Germany provides initial cash injection of 50 million euros. The PEF, announced in May 2016 at the Group of 20 finance ministers meeting in Japan, was oversubscribed by 200 percent. The PEF covers six viruses that are most likely to cause a pandemic, including those responsible for new influenza pandemic virus A, SARS, MERS, Ebola, Marburg, and others like Crimean Congo, Rift Valley and Lassa fever.—AFP

H&M PROFITS LIFTED BY NEW STORE

STOCKHOLM: Swedish clothing giant Hennes and Mauritz (H&M) yesterday announced a stronger than expected profit in the second quarter thanks to the opening of new stores and better cost control. Net profit for the period between March and May stood at 5.9 billion kronor, up by 10 percent, while turnover also rose 10 percent, to 59.5 billion. Operating profit was 7.6 billion, significantly higher than market expectations averaging 7.0 billion, according to the financial agency SME Direkt.

"The profit increase in the second quarter is mostly explained by continued expansion and tight cost control," the Swedish group said in a statement. H&M continues to open physical stores around the world to compensate for the downturn, and even decline, in its profitability, amid fierce competition from online sales platforms. "Customer behavior and expectations are changing at an ever-increasing pace, with a greater and greater share of sales taking place online," chief executive Karl-Johan Persson said in a statement, adding this "brings great opportunities for the H&M group".

"I'm hearing that we are lagging behind in e-commerce, but we are convinced that our strategy ensures the conditions for our long-term growth," told a news conference. H&M expects to increase its annual online sales by 25 percent in the coming years, while total sales are expected to grow by only seven percent in June (down from the eight percent increase in June 2016), a crucial month for summer sales. In the second quarter, the Swedish company further expanded its online offer, which is now available in 41 markets.

It plans to embark on the immense Indian market in 2018. The growing online shopping trend is weighing heavily on H&M's share price on the Stockholm stock exchange, where it has lost nearly 40 percent of its value since November 2015. In recent weeks, analysts have speculated about H&M's potential withdrawal from the stock market via a share buyback by the Persson family.

After a strong opening yesterday, shares fell and then recovered, trading up 1.9 percent at 208.6 kronor on the Stockholm stock exchange at 0942 GMT.

As of May 31, H&M had 4,498 physical stores with a net opening of 147 points of sale since the beginning of the year. In Germany, its biggest market, H&M posted an eight percent sales increase in the quarter, compared to one percent in the United Kingdom, four percent in France, six percent in China and nine percent in the United States. However, these figures are much less flattering in local currencies.—AFP



TOKYO: A shop manager shows off a period Japanese pressing of The Beatles' final studio album 'Let It Be' at the RECOfan music shop in Tokyo's Shibuya district.—AFP photos

SONY TO START SPINNING VINYL AFTER 30-YEAR HIATUS

TOKYO: Three decades after it abandoned vinyl production, Sony says it will start making records again on the back of surging demand for the retro music format. A factory southwest of Tokyo will be churning out freshly pressed records by March next year, Sony Music Entertainment said yesterday. The Japanese giant stopped making vinyl records in 1989, a company spokesman said, as consumers flocked to compact discs and other emerging music technology. Major music market Japan produced nearly 200 million records a year in the mid-seventies, according to the country's recording industry association. Sony was a major global player in the development of CDs, which have since taken a back seat to download and music streaming. Vinyl has been making a global comeback as it attracts not only nostalgic older consumers but also younger generations. Japan's sole record maker Toyokasei is struggling to keep up with the resurgence in vinyl demand, the influential Nikkei newspaper reported.

Sony is now scrambling to find older engineers familiar with how to make records, it added. Panasonic re-launched its legendary Technics SL-1200 turntable several years ago as the market picked up. Sony did not say what music it will release in record format. The Nikkei said the lineup will include popular Japanese songs from the past, including Sony-owned titles, as well as chart-topping contemporary albums.

Global vinyl revenue will top \$1.0 billion this year while sales of CDs and digital downloads continue to fall, according to estimates from consulting firm Deloitte. In Britain, where vinyl's rebirth has been particularly pronounced, records generated more revenue than advertising-backed tiers of streaming platforms last year.—AFP



TOKYO: Vinyl records for sale are seen on display at the RECOfan music shop in Tokyo's Shibuya district.

RIO TINTO SHAREHOLDERS BACK AUSTRALIA MINES SALE TO YANCOAL

SYDNEY: Rio Tinto shareholders yesterday overwhelmingly supported the sale of most of the mining giant's Australian coal assets to China-backed Yancoal, paving the way for the completion of the deal. Shareholders for the world's second-largest miner, which is dual-listed in Britain and Australia, voted 97.2 percent in favor of the US\$2.45 billion offer at their respective annual general meetings, Rio said in a statement. Shares in Rio were trading 3.28 percent higher at Aus\$63.35 late afternoon in Sydney.

The decision came days after Rio's board said it favored Yancoal over two bids for the assets in New South Wales

state from Swiss commodities giant Glencore, which were more than US\$100 million higher. Rio had added that the Yancoal deal was expected to be completed faster due to greater funding and regulatory certainty. Yancoal has already been given the green light by Australia's Foreign Investment Review Board, while the Glencore plan would be subject to regulatory approval. Rio, which in February reported a surge in annual net profit thanks to improving commodity prices, is selling Coal and Allied in a divestment drive that analysts expect will lead to a complete exit from the sector.—AFP



TOKYO: AI-based robot fish known as MIRO (Marine Intelligent Robot), developed by South Korean company AIRO, are seen swimming in a pool during a demonstration as the Advanced Content Technology Expo in Tokyo. —AFP photos



TOKYO: A man rides the 'GODSPEED VR airborne' transforming motorcycle simulator system presented by Japan's Prototype.

TRUE ROMANCE IN THE AIR AT TOKYO VIRTUAL REALITY SHOW

TOKYO: It is Saturday night and you want to have a date with someone special, but you're too tired to get off the sofa. Japanese firm FutureLeap claims it has just the thing for in-the-mood couch potatoes with a virtual reality system so realistic you'd swear that cyber date just whispered sweet nothings in your ear. The company showed off its high-tech romance gear at the three-day Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality exhibition in Tokyo. At FutureLeap's booth, a young model kneels on a fluffy carpet as she tosses balloons in the air, blows bubbles and flirts with a man wearing VR headgear who is sitting some two meters away. He reaches out to touch her shoulder and gets nothing but air.

When she whispers into the device though, he can feel the sensation of her breath on his ear. Most virtual reality romance games feature an animated companion rather

than a real person, said company employee Tomoyuki Takahashi. But in this case, "you feel the real sensation as if you were together alone with a woman who is just your type," he said. "This type of realistic sensation will become the main trend in virtual reality technology." Other companies have even moved away from offerings that require a VR headset.

LiveCartoon CEO Shohei Tsuji, covered head to toe in motion sensors, demonstrated the company's newest product by showing off his best dance moves while a pretty female anime character mimicked his steps on screen. The system, Tsuji said, could be used by retailers who want to interact with customers by having the cutesy character engage passersby while the person who controls the character remains out of sight. "With this system you can have animated characters talking directly to customers," he said.—AFP



TOKYO: Men ride SIMVR VR ride simulators presented by Japan's Wizapply at the VR/AR World Exhibition as part of the Advanced Content Technology Expo in Tokyo.



TOKYO: A model demonstrates Tetra's 'Captureroi'd' motion capture technology, making it possible to control movements in real time from whole body to facial expressions with a computerized graphic character.

CRISIS DEEPENS AS CHINA OUT OF AUSTRALIAN OPEN

SHANGHAI: The powerful China men's table tennis team yesterday pulled out of next week's Australian Open citing fatigue, deepening a crisis sparked by the removal of their popular head coach.

It comes days after the world's top three players—Ma Long, Fan Zhendong and Xu Xin—failed to appear for their second-round matches at the prestigious China Open in protest at the ousting of highly respected coach Liu Guoliang.

The team's withdrawal from the event on Australia's Gold Coast was "disappointing news for all table tennis fans around the world", the governing International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) said in a statement, adding that China's women would play.

The Chinese Table Tennis Association (CTTA), which

is investigating the embarrassing no-show by the players last Friday in Chengdu, a short while later confirmed that it was not sending a men's side to Australia but made no mention of the row over Liu.

"The main players on the men's team are physically exhausted due to continuous participation in competitions, and when injury and illness are added, they are not in a competitive state," the CTTA said in a statement that was quickly ridiculed by Chinese fans on social media. Around the same time, the Olympic and world champion Ma echoed that explanation. "Since the end of May I have continuously competed in the world championship and the Japan and China Opens," the world number one wrote on China's Twitter-like Weibo.

"Due to injuries, illness and physical exhaustion, I

did not sign up for the July Australian Open and I hope fans do not read too much into this." Fan and Xu, who are ranked second and third in the world, respectively, gave similar explanations on Weibo.

Two Chinese coaches also pulled out of the event in Chengdu, triggering a furore in table tennis-mad China. The coaches and players were upset that Liu, a former Grand Slam champion, had lost his job as head coach in a reshuffle at the top of the CTTA, which is now scrambling to contain the fall-out.

Chinese sports fans were deeply sceptical of the CTTA's latest explanation. "Do you think Chinese people are gullible like a three-year-old?" one asked on Weibo. The Australian Open, an event on the sport's top-level Platinum World Tour, starts on July 4. — AFP

MERCKX RECORD WILL FALL TO ME ONE DAY: CAVENDISH

LONDON: Mark Cavendish is adamant he will secure the five Tour de France stage wins to break legendary Belgian Eddie Merckx's all-time record of 34, but it may have to wait another year. The 32-year-old Isle of Man born sprinter—who has 30 stage wins to his name since 2008 — heads into this year's race starting Saturday having recovered from the debilitating Epstein-Barr virus (glandular fever). Cavendish, whose biggest stage haul on one Tour de France was six in 2009, told Thursday's edition of 'The Times' he is not yet firing on all cylinders so despite it being a sprinter-friendly Tour with seven stages potentially up for grabs Merckx' mark may be safe for the moment. "I truly believe that I am the best sprinter on the planet," said Cavendish. "Without this illness, I would be going in looking to pass the record this year.

"The competitive fires are burning but I have to be realistic. "It's like, you know, Ducatis are going to be faster than Hondas. I'm not firing like a Ducati right now."

Cavendish, who has another year remaining on his £2million plus (\$2.6m, 2.3m euros) contract with the Dimension Data team, admits he is "three, four weeks behind" where he

would like to be but is intent on finishing the gruelling race.

"If I was planning on bailing after a week, I wouldn't be going to the Tour at all," he said.

"The hardest thing for me is sprinting and losing. "Not just because it's damaging to my morale, the team's morale, but it's actually good for the other sprinters' morale and once you are on a roll at the Tour you build on that.

"I had to ask myself, 'Would I do myself more damage not winning?'" Cavendish, who finally got his hands on an Olympic medal last year when he took silver in the omnium track event, said there would be many out there who would relish his failing to shine in the Tour.

"As soon as we start on Saturday, a lot of journalists will forget I have been ill, that I've had glandular fever," said Cavendish, who revealed how during his illness climbing the stairs would be so demanding he would literally get down on his hands and knees.

"Half won't have had it, half don't like me anyway. "A few people won't even know. I could be doing myself more damage going and not winning than not going at all. I could be setting up myself to fail." — AFP



DUESSELDORF: Britain's Chris Froome, left, and his teammates get back on the road after changing bicycles during a training ahead of the Tour de France cycling race in Duesseldorf, Germany, yesterday. — AP

CYCLING

SKY 'STEAMROLLER' CRUSHES CHRIS FROOME'S RIVALS

DUSSELDORF: When Chris Froome's Tour de France rivals roll up to the start line in Dusseldorf tomorrow, they will be worrying not only about how to beat the Briton, but also his Sky team.

Sky have won four of the last five Tours and in each of the team, as much as the victor (Bradley Wiggins in 2012 and Froome three times since) have proved too strong for the opposition. Never was that more evident than last year when Sky managed to all but kill any suspense and drama by taking a stranglehold of the race from start to finish.

Froome only looked vulnerable twice during that race, once after being knocked off his bicycle on Mont Ventoux by a photographer's motorcycle, and then after crashing on a wet and slippery descent on the 19th stage. However, he hardly lost any time from either incident while he usually had his all-powerful Sky team-mates surrounding him to keep him out of trouble. On that 19th stage when disaster could have struck, Dutchman Wout Poels remained alongside Froome to guide him safely to the finish.

On the 11th stage he had Welshman Geraint Thomas to thank for helping him latch onto an attack from Peter Sagan to take advantage of crosswinds and steal some time on his rivals. Once again Sky look to be bringing a formidable force to the race, even if the injured Poels is not amongst them.

"Not having Wout here is a big change, he was a big part of my victory last year and certainly we're going to miss him," said Froome.

Former world champion Michal Kwiatkowski of Poland will be riding as a domestique for Froome while Thomas and Spaniard Mikel Landa, who had led

the team at May's Giro d'Italia, will provide chief support in the mountains.

Those two suffered from crashes at the Giro that wrecked their overall hopes and have quickly switched to domestique duties.

'EXTREMELY STRONG'

Alongside them, Froome will also be able to count on Spanish veteran Mikel Nieve and Colombian talent Sergio Henao to help him negotiate the toughest climbs. "We have an extremely strong team in the mountains, if you look at the other GC teams, I definitely feel confident going into the climbs."

On the flat, former world time-trial champion Vasil Kiryienka of Belarus, Briton Luke Rowe and German Christian Knees will supply the power to keep Froome out of trouble.

It is an imposing outfit which the French describe as a "steamroller". And while Sky's strength may not make for great racing, it is crucial to helping Froome dominate. "It's true that Team Sky's most common tactic is to impose a tempo at the front of the peloton that discourages my rivals from attacking me," said Froome in the official race guide.

"This doesn't necessarily produce the best spectacle but, from our point of view, it's the ideal way to keep events under control." Last year Sky sucked the life out of the race but despite their strength, there are at least enough unknowns in bike racing to keep things interesting. In 2014, for example, Froome's team could do nothing as he crashed three times in the wet over two days and was forced out of the race with a broken wrist. — AP



CALVI: In this Monday July 1, 2013 photo, Jan Bakelants of Belgium, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, celebrates on the podium of the third stage of the Tour de France cycling race over 145.5 kilometers (91 miles) with start in Ajaccio and finish in Calvi, Corsica island, France. — AP

LEDECKY CAPTURES 200 FREE TITLE AT US MEET

CHICAGO: Five-time Olympic champion Katie Ledecky won the 200-meter freestyle crown Wednesday at the US Swim Championships, taking her second title of the qualifying meet for next month's World Championships.

Ledecky, who won the 800 free Tuesday after finishing sixth in the 100 free, will swim for titles today in the 400 free and tomorrow in the 1,500 free.

The 20-year-old reigning world and Olympic 200m champion won in 1min 54.84secs, defeating Leah Smith by 1.84 seconds.

She could swim in four individual events and two relays at next month's World Championships in

Budapest, Hungary, with a strong showing at this five-day meet in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Ledecky captured 200, 400 and 800 free Olympic gold last year in Rio-defending the 800 crown she won in London-and helped the US women's 4x200 relay win as well.

Ledecky won the world 400, 800 and 1,500 freestyle titles and shared in a 4x200 free relay win in 2013 in Barcelona then defended those crowns while adding the 200 world title in 2015 at Russia.

Reigning Olympic 100 and 200 backstroke champion Ryan Murphy won the 200 back crown in 1:54.30, downing Rio Olympian Jacob Pebley by .48

of a second. Kathleen Baker, the 2016 Rio Olympic 100 back runner-up, won the 200 back crown in 2:06.38 with 15-year-old Regan Smith second in 2:08.55.

Caeleb Dressel won the 50 butterfly in a meet-record 23.05, breaking the mark of 23.26 set by runner-up Cullen Jones in qualifying. Jones swam 23.27 in the final.

In the 200 breaststroke, Olympian Kevin Cordes won his third national crown in 2:07.41 while Lilly King took the women's title in 2:21.83. Townley Haas won the men's 200 free in 1:45.03 while Kelsi Worrell took the women's 50 butterfly in 25.69. —AFP

LIONS' CHANCES IN SUPER RUGBY HURT BY SKIPPER WHITELEY INJURY

WELLINGTON: The chances of South Africa's Lions ending New Zealand's recent rule over Super Rugby have been hurt with the playoffs approaching after influential captain Warren Whiteley was ruled out for 6-8 weeks with injury, likely seeing him miss the rest of the competition.

The Johannesburg-based Lions have over the last two seasons been the team most likely to challenge the New Zealand outfits, who have won four of the last five Super Rugby titles and are in position again to dominate the playoffs.

The Lions are second overall to the Christchurch-based Crusaders ahead of their final two regular-season games, against Japan's Sunwolves tomorrow and the Sharks two weeks later.

While the Lions will expect to beat the Sunwolves at home, Whiteley's absence could be felt in the South African derby against the Sharks - who are also in the playoffs - and will most certainly be a factor in the knockout stages. Whiteley, the South Africa captain and No. 8 who was injured on international duty, only has a slim chance of recovering from a torn ligament in his pelvis for the week of the Super Rugby final in early August.

The Lions need to win both their remaining league games and hope the Crusaders slip up next month against the defending-champion Hurricanes to top the standings.

Finishing top overall brings the significant advantage of a possible home final.

Following the break for internationals, Super Rugby returns today and tomorrow with games from the South Africa conference only. The Australian teams are back in action next weekend and New Zealand's contenders on July 14 and 15 after the All Blacks' series against the British and Irish Lions.

Those June-July test series will have an impact on the final stages of Super Rugby. As well as the injuries, Super Rugby teams will have to manage their returning internationals as the playoffs approach, making sure top players have enough rest before the business end of the season but aren't left to get rusty.

"It's quite a balancing act we have to play here with the players after a tough few weeks of rugby action they've endured," Sharks forwards coach Ryan Strudwick said.

The Durban-based Sharks, guaranteed a wild-card playoff place, kick off the 15th round against the Bulls today without Springboks forwards Tendai Mtawarira and Jean-Luc du Preez, who are being rested after playing in South Africa's three tests against France. Fullback Curwin Bosch returns to the team from duty with the South Africa under-20s.

The Pretoria-based Bulls, who are out of playoff contention, are missing a host of injured Springboks as they attempt to salvage something from what has been one of the three-time champion's worst Super Rugby seasons.

The run-in still has meaning for the Sharks, with their eventual league position determining their opponents in the knockouts. —AP



WELLINGTON: All Blacks coach Steve Hansen, right, fields questions during a press conference in Wellington, New Zealand, yesterday. The All Blacks play the British and Irish Lions in the second test tomorrow. —AP

RUGBY

ALL BLACKS COACH TELLS MEDIA TO LAY OFF GATLAND

WELLINGTON: All Blacks coach Steve Hansen said yesterday the media needed to stop ridiculing British and Irish Lions coach Warren Gatland and disputed any suggestion of animosity between the pair. He also refused to engage in a war of words with journalists over potentially dangerous play by Lions players in the first Test, describing rugby as "a big boy's game".

The Lions tour of New Zealand has been filled with barbs from both sides, with Hansen variously calling Gatland "desperate" and "predictable" while the Lions coach has claimed he had Hansen "worried" and accused the All Blacks of deliberate foul play.

But in the countdown to the second Test in Wellington tomorrow, with the Lions needing to win to keep the series alive, Hansen poured cold water on talk of mutual dislike between the coaches, both of them New Zealanders. He claimed it was an issue ramped up by the media and took particular exception to one local newspaper cartoon depicting Gatland as a clown. "To ridicule someone is not right and a bit disappointing really," he told a packed press conference.

CHUCKLE ABOUT LIFE

"It's one thing to have a bit of banter, and then you guys beef it up to make it bigger than it really is ... so to come out and do that (cartoon) I think you're ridiculing somebody that doesn't deserve it.

"I read somewhere that I 'lashed out at Warren Gatland'.

I haven't lashed out at Warren Gatland, at all. I've got a lot of respect for him and I'm looking forward to having beverage with him and a chuckle about life. "It's the media that ramp it up because it sells you guys newspapers. Who am I to say stop it? But I do look at it and say 'well, that's actually not how it went'."

Although Gatland has suggested the All Blacks may have been trying to deliberately injure Lions players in the first Test, Hansen refused to bite when questioned about dubious incidents involving Lions prop Mako Vunipola. "It's just something that happens in the game. Vunipola will probably look at it and think 'I was a bit stupid' but move on, we've got another game coming up," Hansen said. "There's no point dragging stuff up." Hansen said there were citing commissioners to catch any foul play that may have escaped the referee and he was not going to debate any issues that went unpunished.

"Move on from it. I don't know any rugby players that we've played against or I've coached, who intentionally go out to hurt anyone. "Rugby's a big boy's game played by big boys and people with character." Gatland, when told of Hansen's comments, also denied any friction describing himself as "pretty mild" and complimentary of the All Blacks but he referred to some people having "a personal campaign" against him.

"I don't know if there's any hostility from this side but hopefully we can have a good game of rugby and maybe enjoy a beer together afterwards." —AFP

PLAYERS PRAISE TIGER FOR GETTING HELP, AWAIT RETURN

POTOMAC: Tiger Woods won't be hosting this week's PGA National tournament as he continues treatment to manage medications following an impaired driving arrest, and players on Wednesday praised his commitment to getting better.

"It's really cool to see what he's doing in terms of he's handling what he's dealing with and he's taking it seriously," said 12th-ranked Justin Thomas, part of Sunday's final US Open pairing two weeks ago.

"As someone who looks up to him and as a friend, I think that's more impressive than coming here." Former world number one Woods, a 14-time major champion whose

charity foundation stages the National, was arrested May 29 near his Florida home for impaired driving. A breathalyzer test showed no sign of alcohol but police video showed Woods struggling to answer questions and he said later he did not realize how prescription drugs he was taking might interact.

Last week, Woods said he had sought help to handle the medications he uses to ease back pain and sleep issues.

"I'm currently receiving professional help to manage my medications and the ways that I deal with back pain and a sleep disorder," Woods tweeted.

World number 17 Patrick Reed, who

played under assistant captain Woods on last year's triumphant US Ryder Cup squad, said everyone should understand Woods's absence. "Tiger's here in spirit, you know. It's his event," Reed said. "It's never going to hurt the golf tournament or hurt any event to have his name a part of it. Means a lot because of how much he means to golf."

"It's one of those things. We all would love for him to be here, but at the end of the day, for him to put his foot down and go ahead and take care of himself and try to get better, that's more important than playing golf or being here."

Woods made a comeback from back sur-

gery last December in the Bahamas but has played only twice this year, missing the cut at Torrey Pines and withdrawing from the European Tour's Dubai Desert Classic in February. In April, Woods announced he had undergone his fourth back operation since 2014 to ease back and leg pain and would miss the remainder of the season, including the National. "He cares a lot about this tournament," Thomas said. "It's his tournament and he wants to be here, but he's worried about what's going to be best for him, best for his family. He wants to get back on track and I think it speaks a lot to him (that) he's taking it very seriously. —AFP



OLYMPIA FIELDS: Se Yeon Ryu of South Korea hits her tee shot on the third hole during a practice round prior to the 2017 KPMG PGA Championship at Olympia Fields Country Club on Wednesday in Olympia Fields, Illinois. —AFP

GOLF

RYU SEEKS 2ND STRAIGHT LPGA MAJOR TO CONFIRM NO 1 PERCH

OLYMPIA FIELDS: So Yeon Ryu wants to halt what has resembled a game of musical chairs on the LPGA Tour this season. The newly minted world No. 1 will be going for her third win when the KPMG Women's PGA Championship - the second major of the season - teed off yesterday on her 27th birthday. She comes in off a dominating win last week in the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship, which made her the first repeat winner in 16 events this season.

Ryu won the ANA Inspiration in April for her second major title after front-running Lexi Thompson was tripped up by a four-shot penalty. Ryu beat Thompson on the first hole of sudden death.

Including the KPMG, the women's tour will play three majors in six weeks, giving Ryu the chance to prove her climb to the top is just the beginning of a long reign.

When a reporter asked this week whether her ambitions included sweeping the five majors this year, she quickly, but gently corrected him.

"Actually, career Grand Slam," chuckled Ryu, who already owns a US Women's Open title. "I haven't thought about the season Grand Slam. "But if I can do it," she added a moment later, brightening, "that's going to be fantastic."

It would put a shine on what's been a sparkling week already. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Olympic skiing champion Lindsey Vonn were among a

number of prominent women involved in mentoring programs spurred by the tournament spotted on-course this week. A number of players visited Wrigley Field for a game and were spotted sampling nearby Chicago's high-profile culinary scene.

Five-time major champion Phil Mickelson, a KPMG endorser, kicked off things Monday by beating defending champion Brooke Henderson and Lydia Ko and Stacy Lewis in a short-game shootout event at Olympia Fields, a former men's US Open site.

"I was nervous," Mickelson said afterward, "because I know how good they are." Asked about whether his own daughters might follow him into the game, Lefty just laughed. "They play sparingly," he said. "They're not passionate about it, but they're very confident."

Ryu's confidence is on the rise after an up-and-down career. She won the 2011 US Women's Open, but only twice more on the LPGA Tour until this season. She has strengthened nearly every part of her game since she began working with Cameron McCormick, who also coaches Jordan Spieth.

So far, Ryu hasn't had the chance to pick Spieth's brain - "We always had our lesson times, but we never really practiced together," she said. But McCormick's experience steering Spieth through some pressure-packed situations has already paid dividends.—AP

THOMAS FEELS LIKE HE HAS ANOTHER MAJOR 63 IN HIM

POTOMAC: Justin Thomas, who joined two of golf's most exclusive clubs this year by shooting 59 in a PGA event and 63 in a major, insists more low rounds are coming. The 24-year-old American fired a nine-under par 63 in the third round of the US Open two weeks ago at Erin Hills, becoming only the 29th player to match the low 18-hole score ever posted in any major and just the fifth to shoot 63 at a US Open.

But 12th-ranked Thomas, a favorite in the US PGA National that started yesterday, says he has another such round in him. "When I get going, I can go low pretty well," Thomas said Wednesday. "I mean, this sounds probably pretty arrogant, but I feel like I'll shoot another 63 in a major at some point in my career."

"I don't know if it will ever happen, but I feel like I have the game to do so." Only two players have fired major rounds of 63 twice and both of them are multiple major winners. Australia's Greg Norman did it in the second round of the 1986 British Open at Turnberry on his way to victory and in the first round of the 1996 Masters, when a shocking final-round collapse left him second to Nick Faldo. Fiji's Vijay Singh did it at the second round of the 1993 PGA Championship at Inverness and the 2003 US Open at Olympia Fields, but didn't win either time. Sweden's Henrik Stenson shot 63 in last year's British Open final round to win at Royal Troon, a feat Thomas saw as much superior to his effort, the lowest sub-par round in US Open history.

"To do it on Sunday when someone's chasing you down is way more impressive than my 63," Thomas said. Last January, Thomas became only the seventh player in US PGA history to shoot a 59, a closing eagle in the first round of the Sony Open in Hawaii making him the youngest of the sub-60 set, even though it came five months after Jim Furyk has set the new mark to beat with a 58 in the final round of the Travelers Championship.

'CRAZY THINGS HAPPEN'

Thomas said there was no way to tell that greatness was coming when working on the practice range before a round.

"You don't feel a round like that coming, but you definitely feel more confident going into the day than you maybe do other days when you're not hitting it as well or warming up as well, if that makes sense," Thomas said. "There have been days when I've had great rounds when I haven't slept well or when I kind of just wake up crabby or not in a good mood. It doesn't happen that often, but crazy things happen in this game." In the final Sunday pair at a major for the first time, Thomas made bogeys on three of the first five holes and never recovered as Brooks Koepka won his first major title. Thomas finished ninth.

"I didn't know how I would feel, how I would react," Thomas said. "I didn't have it that day. I really fought as hard as I could to shoot 75. "I learned a lot about myself. I handled it well. I was comfortable. I hung in there." —AFP

STILL WITHOUT FULL STRENGTH, KVITOVA FAVORITE TO WIN

LONDON: Petra Kvitova still has not regained full strength in her left hand, the one she uses to swing a tennis racket so well that she won Wimbledon twice - and the one that was stabbed by an intruder at her home in the Czech Republic late last year.

Just seven months after that attack, Kvitova somehow carries the status of the closest thing to a favorite at the All England Club, where play in the grass-court Grand Slam tournament begins Monday.

Not that she's all that concerned, understandably, with others' thoughts about whether she can add to the trophies she clutched at Wimbledon in 2011 and 2014.

"I don't see it like that," Kvitova said in an email

to The Associated Press. "I am just happy to be back on the court and that's it," she said. "I will be focusing on myself and not thinking any further than my first match."

Simply competing these days is an accomplishment in itself for someone who initially was told there was a possibility it might never happen again. All five fingers on her left hand were injured in the late December knifing, and she needed surgery.

"There was definitely doubt in my mind that I would ever be able to play again, because that's what some of the doctors were saying," Kvitova said. "But the more I heard people doubting if I could come back, the more it motivated me. I wanted to prove

people wrong and I love challenges, so I think that's what kept me going through the recovery process."

LAST MINUTE DECISION

The 27-year-old Kvitova, who has been ranked as high as No. 2 and is seeded 11th at Wimbledon, only began practicing a couple of weeks before the French Open started in May. She made a last-minute decision to enter the clay-court major and wound up winning her opening match, then losing her next.

In her comeback's second tournament, last week on grass at Birmingham, England, Kvitova earned the title, beating Ashleigh Barty 4-6, 6-3, 6-2 in the final with the help of 13 aces. —AP

TENNIS

FEDERER BACKS INJURED MURRAY TO RECOVER FOR WIMBLEDON

LONDON: Roger Federer expects Andy Murray to defend the Wimbledon title despite his hip injury scare, but he warned the world number one not to play through the pain if he is seriously hurt. Murray's fitness has become a major issue ahead of the start of Wimbledon on Monday after the Scot was forced to pull out of two grass-court exhibition matches at the Hurlingham Club this week.

The two-time Wimbledon winner withdrew from facing Lucas Pouille on Tuesday due to his sore hip, then opted not to take part in his scheduled practice session on Wednesday.

Yesterday, Murray revealed he wouldn't play his second exhibition today because he wanted to continue resting his hip. With Wimbledon just days away, Murray's fitness woes

have sparked fears he might miss the tournament. But as the defending champion, Murray has the honour of opening proceedings on Wimbledon's Centre Court next week and Federer believes the 30-year-old will be there for the start of the tournament.



Roger Federer

"We're talking like he's in hospital almost. It seems like he can't walk no more," Federer told reporters at a Laver Cup launch in Wimbledon on Thursday. "The way I know Andy, he is tough as nails. I feel like he will be there on opening Monday."

"There are injuries and injuries. He would have to be seriously injured not to play."

"For me if he can get through the first round and feel better after he should play. I expect him to play."

While Federer is confident top seed Murray will be ready to feature at the All England Club, the seven-time Wimbledon champion acknowledged it would be foolish to play if he doesn't believe he is fit enough to make it through the gruelling two-week tournament.

"You would need to feel like you could play for 14 days, if you feel you can only play one match it isn't good enough," Federer said. "Going over the best-of-five sets over two weeks, only the tough ones will survive, it will flush you out. "You need to feel confident in your body otherwise what's the point. "The world is watching, the defending champion opening the court is a big deal."

"Because it's a big deal you want to feel as close to 100 percent as possible."

'ABSOLUTELY AMAZED'

Even if Murray is fit enough to play, he goes into Wimbledon desperately short of time on grass after suffering a shock Queen's Club first-round defeat against Australian world number 90 Jordan Thompson. But Federer says Murray is experienced enough on grass to be able to quickly adapt to the unique demands on the surface. "Yes sure, it's ideal is to win everything beforehand and to feel great in practice, but the most important thing for him is to get through the first week," Federer said. —AFP



BRISBANE: Australian boxer Jeff Horn trains in front of the public in a mall in Brisbane, Australia, yesterday. Horn is preparing for his WBO welterweight world title bout against Filipino Manny Pacquiao on Sunday, July 2. —AP

BOXING

PACQUIAO KEEPS LOW PROFILE AS HORN GETS LOUDER AHEAD OF FIGHT

BRISBANE: Manny Pacquiao kept a low profile, apparently at the insistence of local police, leaving opponent Jeff Horn to entertain a bigger crowd at his downtown practice session than he's attracted for previous fights.

Pacquiao, the 11-time world champion, is putting his WBO welterweight world title belt on the line on Sunday at Suncorp Stadium, where he's a hot favorite to register his 60th professional win.

On a previous visit to promote the "Battle of Brisbane," Pacquiao was mobbed by adoring fans in an unexpected rush at an impromptu public appearance. So local organizers said they took advice from Queensland state police to give the senator from the Philippines time off from promotional activities Thursday while Horn appeared for a light practice session in a makeshift ring near the Queens Street Mall, reveling in the attention of hundreds of spectators enjoying a sunny lunch break. "For safety purposes, Manny won't be here today," Duco Events director Dean Lonergan said. "We took that on advice from Queensland police."

Pacquiao's camp got his point across to local fans on Wednesday, anyway, when his legendary long-time trainer Freddie Roach predicted the fight would be "short and sweet" and that somebody would get knocked out.

Pacquiao (59-6-2) had the last of his 38 knockout wins in 2009, but he said he's been working harder in preparation for this fight than he has in years. He has knocked down sparring partners, Roach said, and had to be forced to stop in some sessions because he was working too much.

Horn's promoters have accused Pacquiao's backers of not taking the fight seriously enough, accusing the 38-year-old Filipino of already talking about a potential rematch with Floyd Mayweather and of being disrespectful during a news conference by texting on his cell

phone. But Pacquiao is used to the pre-match games, and says he likes nothing better than to take on an opponent on their home soil and in front of a big crowd. They'll have that for the afternoon, outdoor fight. Lonergan said more than 47,000 tickets had already been sold - already almost 10,000 more than the Australian record for boxing - and they were on track to top 50,000. The fight is also tracking to sell more pay per views than any other in the Australian market, and the live ESPN broadcast could reach an estimated 95 million US homes on Saturday night.

The odds-makers aren't giving Horn, a 29-year-old former school-teacher who is unbeaten in 17 professional fights, much of a chance against a seasoned, eight-division world champion.

But in and around his public skipping and shadow boxing sessions, Horn said he was bigger (he still needs to shed 3 kilograms to - 6.6 pounds - make the weight), younger and had what it takes to beat Pacquiao. Since losing the megafight to Mayweather in April 2015, Pacquiao has rebounded to beat highly rated Tim Bradley and - after briefly flirting with retirement - Jessie Vargas.

Horn said he moves better than Vargas and will be a tougher option for Pacquiao. "I haven't pictured what punch ... is going to happen," Horn said. "All I've pictured for myself is my hand raised and that belt around my waist. "I'm not going to say I'm going to knock him out, but I can win this." Horn has had 10 wins over top 15 world-rated opponents and his 16-0-1 record includes 11 knockouts. But none of those rivals have been anywhere close to Pacquiao's caliber.

Still, when asked if he had the punch to knock out Pacquiao, Horn didn't miss a beat. "Definitely," he said. "If I can land the right shot on Manny Pacquiao. He will go to sleep. "I don't say that disrespectfully as in 'I'm definitely going to knock Manny Pacquiao out.' But if I land that shot, he's going to go down." —AP



WASHINGTON: Bryce Harper #34 of the Washington Nationals beats the throw Javier Baez #9 of the Chicago Cubs for a double in the fifth inning during a baseball game at Nationals Park on Wednesday in Washington, DC. — AFP

BASEBALL

STRASBURG, STRIKEOUT KING IN NATIONALS WIN

WASHINGTON: Stephen Strasburg struck out 13 in seven innings, Bryce Harper had two doubles and two RBIs, and the Washington Nationals beat the Chicago Cubs 8-4 on Wednesday. Anthony Rendon and Matt Wieters hit back-to-back homers against John Lackey (5-9) during Washington's four-run second inning. After the Cubs pulled within three at 6-3, Daniel Murphy went deep in the fifth. It was a rough day for the Cubs, who cut veteran catcher Miguel Montero after he criticized pitcher Jake Arrieta for his role in the Nationals' seven steals in Tuesday's 6-1 win over the World Series champions. Then reigning NL MVP Kris Bryant departed in the sixth with an apparent right ankle injury. Strasburg (9-2) allowed three runs, two earned, and four hits.

ANGELS 3, DODGERS 2

Ben Revere scored the winning run from second base on a passed ball and a throwing error by catcher Yasmani Grandal, and the Los Angeles Angels blew a ninth-inning lead before beating the Dodgers. Cameron Maybin ended up with a walk-off strikeout of sorts when Grandal lost control of Pedro Baez's third strike and then put his throw over Chase Utley's head at first, allowing Revere to score in bizarre fashion. Grandal had just hit a tying homer off Cam Bedrosian (2-0) with two outs in the ninth for the Dodgers, but the Angels rallied against Baez (2-1) to send the NL leaders to just their third loss in 20 games. Andrelton Simmons hit a two-run homer in the sixth for the Angels.

YANKEES 12, WHITE SOX 3

Miguel Andujar had three hits and four RBIs in his major league debut, Aaron Judge added his major league-leading 27th homer and the struggling New York Yankees pounded the White Sox. Andujar made a good impression after being called up from Triple-A with Matt Holliday going on the disabled list because of an illness. He gave New York a 3-0 lead with a two-run single against Carlos Rodon (0-1) in the first.

He also singled in the third, walked in the eighth and drove in two more with a double in the ninth. Judge's two-run drive capped a five-run sixth against reliever Jake Petricka, breaking open a 3-2 game. And New York came away with a lopsided win after dropping 11 of 14. Masahiro Tanaka (6-7) went six innings for his first win since May 8. The right-hander gave up two runs and six hits after going 0-6 in his previous eight starts.

INDIANS 5, RANGERS 3

Trevor Bauer pitched into the seventh inning, Michael Brantley drove in two runs and Cleveland got the win in manager Terry Francona's return to the team. Francona was cleared to come back after another health scare forced him to leave Monday's game and miss Tuesday's 2-1 loss to Texas. The 58-year-old Francona has been fitted with a heart monitor, but he said doctors have ruled out any serious health issues. Bauer (7-6) allowed one run - Robinson Chirinos' homer - and four hits in 6 1/3 innings. Brantley had RBI singles in the third and the seventh. Texas ace Yu Darvish (6-6) gave up three runs - two earned - in six innings.

ASTROS 11, ATHLETICS 8

Josh Reddick and George Springer had three hits apiece and combined for five RBIs, powering Houston to the victory. Michael Feliz (4-1) struck out two in a scoreless fifth for the win. Ken Giles struck out two in the ninth for his 18th save. The Astros jumped in front with five runs in the third. Springer hit an RBI double and scored on Reddick's base hit, helping Houston open a 9-5 lead. Oakland right-hander Jesse Hahn was charged with six runs and nine hits in two-plus innings. Khris Davis homered twice and drove in four runs for the A's. Ryon Healy, Matt Olson and Jed Lowrie also went deep.

METS 8, MARLINS 0

Steven Matz pitched seven innings and two relievers completed a seven-hitter, helping the

Mets to the victory. Asdrubal Cabrera and Curtis Granderson each hit a two-run homer in support of Matz (2-1), who allowed six hits, all singles, and one walk while lowering his ERA to 2.67 in four starts this year. Matz's performance gave the rotation a welcome lift hours after right-hander Robert Gsellman became the sixth Mets starting pitcher to go on the disabled list this season. Gsellman strained his left hamstring Tuesday. Jeff Locke (0-4) allowed three runs, all in a 32-pitch first inning, but settled down to last 5 2/3 innings. He retired 12 in a row after his rocky start but fell to 0-3 with a 6.20 ERA in five career starts against the Mets.

REDS 4, BREWERS 3

Scooter Gennett hit a two-run homer against the club that decided he no longer fit its rebuilding plans, and Billy Hamilton scored the tiebreaking run in the eighth inning for Cincinnati. The Brewers lost starter Chase Anderson to a strained oblique. Anderson hurt his left side while striking out in the top of the second inning, a notable setback to the NL Central leaders. He is second on the club with six wins. After Travis Shaw tied it at 3 in the eighth with a solo homer off Drew Storen (2-2), Hamilton led off the bottom of the inning with a walk and two steals off Corey Knebel (0-1). Hamilton scored on Adam Duvall's infield single. The game ended on an unusual play. With runners at first and third, Raisel Iglesias fanned Jesus Aguilar for the second out, and Stephen Vogt was caught trying to take second before Jonathan Villar could make it home from third on the back end of the attempted double steal. Iglesias got his 14th save in 15 chances.

BLUE JAYS 4, ORIOLES 0

Marcus Stroman pitched five-hit ball into the eighth inning for Toronto, and Jose Bautista and Justin Smoak homered. Stroman (8-4) bounced back nicely from his worst start of the season, a seven-run outing at Texas last Thursday. The right-hander allowed five singles and struck out

seven to win for the first time since June 10 at Seattle. Wade Miley (3-6) was charged with four runs, three earned, in five innings. The Orioles had won three in a row. Roberto Osuna struck out the side in the ninth, finishing a five-hitter. The Blue Jays improved to 3-8 against the Orioles.

TWINS 4, RED SOX 1

Adalberto Mejia pitched 5 2/3 innings in his second straight scoreless start, Max Kepler hit a two-run homer and Minnesota rebounded from two consecutive losses against Boston. Kepler also had an RBI single, and Miguel Sano added an RBI double to help the Twins improve to 24-11 on the road. Mejia (3-3) allowed five hits, struck out three and walked one. Brandon Kintzler got the final three outs for his 21st save. Boston starter Rick Porcello (4-10) gave up four runs and six hits in six innings.

ROYALS 8, TIGERS 2

Salvador Perez and Mike Moustakas hit consecutive homers during Kansas City's four-run fourth inning. Ian Kennedy (2-6) allowed two runs and five hits in seven innings for the Royals, earning his second victory in three starts. He gave up solo homers to Miguel Cabrera and Alex Avila, but only after Kansas City had jumped to a 5-0 lead. Detroit's Daniel Norris (4-6) permitted five runs and eight hits in 3 2/3 innings. Six of those hits came in the fourth. The Royals snapped a two-game losing streak and improved to 16-8 in June.

PIRATES 6, RAYS 2

Jose Osuna doubled twice and drove in two runs, rookie Josh Bell hit his 15th homer and Pittsburgh jumped all over Tampa Bay's Blake Snell. Osuna's ground-rule RBI double sparked a four-run rally with two out in the first. Bell led off the fourth with a home run and Osuna added another RBI double in the fifth. Snell (0-5) walked five in five innings in his return to the starting rotation after a stint in Triple-A. —AP

RONALDO EXITS CONFED CUP TO MEET NEWBORN TWINS

KAZAN: Portugal's superstar captain Cristiano Ronaldo revealed yesterday he will not play in the Confederations Cup third-place match this weekend as he will finally meet his newborn twin boys.

Hours after Wednesday's 3-0 defeat to Chile in a penalty shoot-out in Kazan, Ronaldo said he had been given permission to miss the play-off in Moscow, against either

Germany or Mexico, to meet his new arrivals.

Ronaldo, 32, is believed to have fathered the twins with a surrogate mother in the United States and already has a seven-year-old son, Cristiano Ronaldo Jr, from a previous relationship.

The Real Madrid forward says he gave his "body and soul" for Portugal in the semi-final, which finished goalless after extra time, "even

though my two sons were born".

"The President of the Portuguese Football Federation and the national coach have an attitude that has touched me and I will not forget," the four-time world player of the year wrote on his official Facebook page.

"I'm very happy to finally be with my children for the first time." Having won man-of-the-match awards in each of Portugal's three

Confederations Cup group stage games, Ronaldo did not have his best match against Chile, whose defence managed to subdue the Real star.

As well as meeting his newborn babies, Ronaldo faces an uncertain future having threatened to quit Spain as he faces allegations of tax evasion in a court in Madrid next month. —AFP

ATHLETICS

BOLT WINS 100 METERS AT GOLDEN SPIKE MEET

OSTRAVA: Usain Bolt started the European leg of his final season before retirement with a victory in the 100 meters at the Golden Spike meeting on Wednesday. At the meet where he has most frequently competed in his career, with nine appearances, Bolt reeled in the rest of the field after a trademark slow start to cross the finish line in 10.06 seconds.

However, he had to hold off a strong challenge from Yunier Perez of Cuba, edging him by 0.03. Jak Ali Harvey of Turkey was third in 10.26. Bolt's performance fell short of his season best of 10.03, which was clocked at the 100 and 200 world record holder's final race in his native Jamaica on June 11.

"I'm not happy with the time," he said. "It wasn't a good race, it was pretty slow." Bolt mentioned a back problem that slowed him, but downplayed its significance. "I'm going to see my doctor (in Germany) soon, I know he will fix every problem," he said. "All I need to do now is just to train hard and focus on getting myself into great shape. I'm not worried about that. It's just my back, it's always an issue. I didn't get injured, that's a key thing."

The eight-time Olympic champion is preparing for the world championships in London in August, his final major competition. Bolt said he liked the Golden Spike because it was one of the first professional meets that invited him to run at the start of his career, and he also appreciated the fact that the stands were always packed - despite bad weather during some of his previous appearances.

In an emotional farewell after the race, fans held up colored cards that formed a huge Jamaican flag in the stands, with a giant message: "THANX UB." The Jamaican anthem followed, with Bolt singing along.

"That was a surprise," Bolt said. "I didn't expect anything like that. They always give me so much love here, I really appreciate that." The only other race he's scheduled before the worlds is the Diamond League event in Monaco on July 21. He's still undecided about other meets.

Other winners on Wednesday were Mo Farah and Wayde van Niekerk of South Africa, who led home the rarely-contested 300 meters in a world's best time of 30.81.

Farah claimed victory in the 10,000 in what was likely one of his last races on the track. The British distance specialist, who defended his Olympic titles in both the 5,000 and 10,000 at the Rio Games last year, plans to retire from track to move to road races after the worlds.

Farah held off a challenge from Kenyan Mathew Kimeli, surging past him with 200 meters to go to win in 27:12.09. Kimeli clocked 27:14.43. —AP



OSTRAVA: Jamaican Usain Bolt competes during the IAAF World Challenge Zlata Tretra (Golden Spike) athletics tournament in Ostrava, Czech Republic, yesterday. —AFP



KAZAN: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo fights for the ball against Chile's midfielder Arturo Vidal during the 2017 Confederations Cup semi-final football match between Portugal and Chile at the Kazan Arena in Kazan on Wednesday. —AFP

SOCCER

CHILE CRUSH PORTUGAL ON PENALTIES TO REACH FINAL

KAZAN: Claudio Bravo made three penalty saves as Chile crushed Portugal 3-0 in a penalty shootout to reach the Confederations Cup final on Wednesday. Bravo, who missed the first two cup games in Russia because of injury, stopped penalties by Ricardo Quaresma, Joao Moutinho and Nani, sending Chile to its third straight international final after winning consecutive Copa America titles.

Arturo Vidal, Charles Aranguiz and Alexis Sanchez all scored for Chile in the shootout. The teams were drawing 0-0 after normal and extra time. The result was justice for Chile, which had a strong penalty appeal turned down in extra time and then saw the ball hit the woodwork twice in the same move a few minutes later.

Chile and Portugal both came close in the first 10 minutes but there were few chances after that in a lackluster game between two of the main title favorites. Cristiano Ronaldo was off-form for Portugal and Chile gradually took control in front of 40,855 fans at Kazan

Arena, most of them behind Chile.

Chile will play Germany or Mexico in Sunday's final in St. Petersburg. It will be seeking its first title outside of South America after winning the Copa America in 2015 and 2016, both times in penalty kick shoot-outs.

"I was injured and I didn't play at my normal pace, but I normally get things quietly," Bravo said. "This is very important to us because it's like completing a very successful cycle. We are very happy to be able to play in the final."

Portugal was looking for its second consecutive title after winning the European Championship last year. In the shoot-out, Bravo dived to his right to stop weak penalty kicks by both Quaresma and Joao Moutinho, then switched sides to save Nani's timorous shot. Nani tip-toed desperately slowly to the ball looking for all the world as though he did not want to take the kick. And he patted it gently to Bravo.

"Claudio was amazing, the players who scored their penalties were amazing and I think we deserve to be in the

final," Chile coach Juan Antonio Pizzi said. "We have made a huge effort and I think you could see it during the game."

Chile had its chances to win it in extra time when Vidal's powerful right-footed shot struck the far post. From the rebound, substitute Martin Rodriguez hit the crossbar with Portugal goalkeeper Rui Patricio already beaten.

Sanchez had already had a chance to break the deadlock six minutes into extra time, but his header from near the penalty spot went just wide after a well-placed cross by Mauricio Isla.

Chile wanted a late penalty when Francisco Silva was stepped on by a defender inside the area with only a few minutes left, but the referee let the play continue and it was not reviewed by video. Ronaldo had some chances in regulation time but couldn't capitalize on them, including an 85th-minute header that went wide. "I think it was an excellent game, a good propaganda for football, two excellent teams," Portugal coach Fernando Santos said. "They both showed they wanted to win." — AP

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Sports

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WASHINGTON: Washington Nationals short-stop Trea Turner leaps to make a throw to first to get out Chicago Cubs' Javier Baez during the ninth inning of a baseball game, Wednesday, in Washington. The Nationals won 8-4. — AP

STRASBURG, STRIKEOUT KING IN NATIONALS WIN

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