

Metro aims to break new ground in car-mad Qatar

37



Guardiola fights on after Man City gamble fails

45



See Pages 46 & 47



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Hands of an artisan

SEE PAGE 3

1,000 US TROOPS TO KUWAIT TO FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIC STATE

KUWAIT/WASHINGTON: Washington is preparing to send at least 1,000 US troops to Kuwait to bolster a reserve force in the fight against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. US officials quoted by wire agencies said that the Trump administration is weighing the deployment in the attempt to speed up the ongoing US-led offensive against IS.

Yesterday, the US deployed Marines into Syria with heavy artillery as part of an offensive to oust IS from its self-proclaimed headquarters in Raqqa. The deployment is temporary. But it is likely an early indication that the White House is leaning toward giving the Pentagon greater flexibility to make routine combat decisions in the IS fight.

Military commanders frustrated by what they considered micromanagement under the previous administration have argued for greater freedom to make daily decisions on how best to fight the enemy. The Marines moving into Syria are pre-positioning howitzers to be ready to assist local Syrian forces, said the official, who was not authorized to discuss the deployment publicly so spoke on condition of anonymity. Under the existing limits put in place by the Obama administration, the military can have up to 503 US forces in Syria. But temporary personnel do not count against the cap. The movement of the Marines to Syria was first reported by The Washington Post.

Continued on Page 9



In this Feb 27, 2017 file photo, US President Donald Trump speaks in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington. — AP

Local Spotlight

HAPPY WOMEN'S DAY!



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Every little thing done by any woman matters to a lot of people. This is a fact of life, and for this I say 'thank you!' Well, men, you have to deal with this day, because no matter how important you think you are, women carry out lots of different tasks at any time every single day of the year, so please let her make this day her own. She deserves it.

Women's Day is not another Valentine's Day. It is a day to recall, renew and revamp our thinking and appreciation for all women for what they do so life can go on. International Women's Day is celebrated on March 8 every year. It commemorates the struggle for women's rights. Many countries celebrate International Women's Day to remember the achievements of all women irrespective of their religion, language, culture and economic, social or political status.

The United Nations charter in 1945 was the first international convention that affirmed the principles of equality between men and women. Through time, the United Nations has tried to set up plans and programs to support and empower women to enable them to improve their conditions. I cannot say that the programs have benefited all women, but it is an attempt, and perhaps the most prominent and best attempt was the call to respect human rights and equality in rights for all humans. I believe in the empowerment of women by the United Nations to address political, economic and social challenges all over the world.

Women's rights are not a gift from any man or await his approval. It is well known that many conservatives reject any kind of celebration on this day because of their backwardness, which led women to struggle and fight to get their rights.

Unfortunately, women's rights today are still fragile and prone to shattering. There are voices within the community claiming that we honor women throughout the year as mothers, etc., but the truth is that men also issue laws against women without showing respect to their rights to defend their own issues. The most prominent example is the women's right to attend college and attain higher education. Does the man or the family have any right to prevent a girl from getting a university education? Arab reality confirms that there are still families that hold the upper hand in determining the fate of a girl.

Yesterday, I read a sad story about an Arab girl who killed herself because her family prevented her from completing her university education and forced her to marry someone they chose. This led her to depression and suicide, and the community lost a young woman. No one speaks about honor crimes or the fact that some girls are still forced to marry their relatives, whether they approve it or not. That fact is that until today, there are many challenges that confront women around the globe.

Sad to say, women are still resisting the macho culture that prevents them from being recognized and labeled as second-class citizens. Women's success stories are few and limited due to the problems they face on a universal level. The UN's call to empower women still hasn't found its way to many countries and people, and this program needs a lot of work. Maybe the UN needs to rephrase its agenda and action plan on this issue.

Still, March 8 is a good day to remind the people how valuable you are. Ladies, enjoy the day and remember that you are fabulous and wonderful and a day without you in the life of your beloved ones is nothing.

Happy Women's Day!

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Fog shrouds Souq Sharq and its popular fishing pier in this early morning image by Kuna photographer Mustafa Albader.

IMPRINT

SELF-HELP MOVEMENT IN KUWAIT NEEDS HELP



By Jeri Al-Jeri

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Universally, people seek infinite happiness - a natural desire that nobody would want to debate whether or not it is a worthy goal. However, cultures have always had their special "sketch" on what is the perfect definition of a happy individual. China, statistically, houses the least happy demography. It has a complex concept of happiness that demands the loss of one's self in the service of his or her society. Denmark has the highest rates of happiness and the most simple standard of who or what a happy person might be, summed up in the word "lykke" (being joyful), by simple treats of the likes of a chocolate bar or an appealing scent. It used to be that way on the other side of the new world - "happiness" is enshrined in the American constitution as a human right. And the UN considers it to be a "fundamental human goal".

Things have changed, and globalization has made this earth of bustling continents into a small village with "copy-paste" education. So has this inestimable human value of happiness changed the way it used to effect economies.

Keeping in mind the rule of thumb that dictates that the more rare the concept of happiness is in a given culture, the more costly it gets. For example in America, the Merriam Webster definition of happiness is facing changes. The classical definition of happiness used to be "the state of being happy". But is predicted by researchers to be radically changed to "the act of preserving a goal", all due to the over whelming flow of books and seminars of the self-help movement that has

a more Asian religiosity base orientation to it, or as a Canadian psychology professor labeled it - a kind of "self-deification". "Change your life, fate and casualties with your positivity by simply paying this fee for that seminar or this book" is simply based on the grandiose assumption that all is acceptable for the sake of peak self-confidence.

The decline of religiosity in the West made the meaning of life an enigma and the way of life to be simply measured by "how efficient I can be to reach my goal that only my likeness led me to seek". This attitude generates a readiness to be beguiled by seductive exaggerations. This self-help movement has been packed and sold to Kuwaitis along with the rest of what logistics has brought to us to Kuwaiti shores.

Fortunately, the same movement of professional psychologists in the West and other academics, who are fighting the self-help movement, have found Kuwaiti and Saudi colleagues who keep explaining to the masses how damaging these self-help "products", as they are trademarked, can be for our cognitions and psyche. Tagging along the "soda-pop culture", the self-help seminars have tagged themselves to the level of energy drinks that disregard how insanely hazardous they can be for the heart and the nervous system. Its marketing slogans can be summed up in this statement - "be infinitely happy now". It is impossible to debunk such a quote because of its failure to conform to universal grammar and logic. In the end, "Money makes the world go...crazy".

Artisan hands

A series by photographer Huda Al-Abdulgumhni



Al-Hayak
Bo Salem is a
bisht maker



Al-Gallaf
Ibrahim Al-Ashwak is
a dhow builder.



Al-Shnbak
Ali Al-Roumi sews ropes. Ropes are
used to encapsulate and strengthen
the caskets made of teakwood.

— All photos by
Huda Al-Abdulgumhni



Al-Ghaffas
Bo Waleed is a palm
leaves weaver.



Al-Sadu
Om Fayez is a wool weaver.

In this series of photographs, I focused on the hands of artisans - the hands that once created the simple, functional and beautiful handicrafts that every Kuwaiti household used or donned on a daily basis: Dhows, woolen weavings, palm baskets, knotted ropes, burqas and bishts. Bearing the passage of time, their aged hands remind us of a time past when we relied on our own hands to sustain ourselves, a time when the materials available - sourced from the desert or from travels at sea - generated a material culture that was distinctly Khaleeji in its simplicity and restraint.

Today, the number of artisans has dwindled and only a handful remain. Finding the six artisans was in itself a journey of research and discovery, a sad realization that what once was an era of creativity and self-sufficiency had reached its terminus. Embedded in these 12 palms is the memory of a whole crafts culture that was washed away by a changing economy and a growing reliance on cheaper foreign imports.

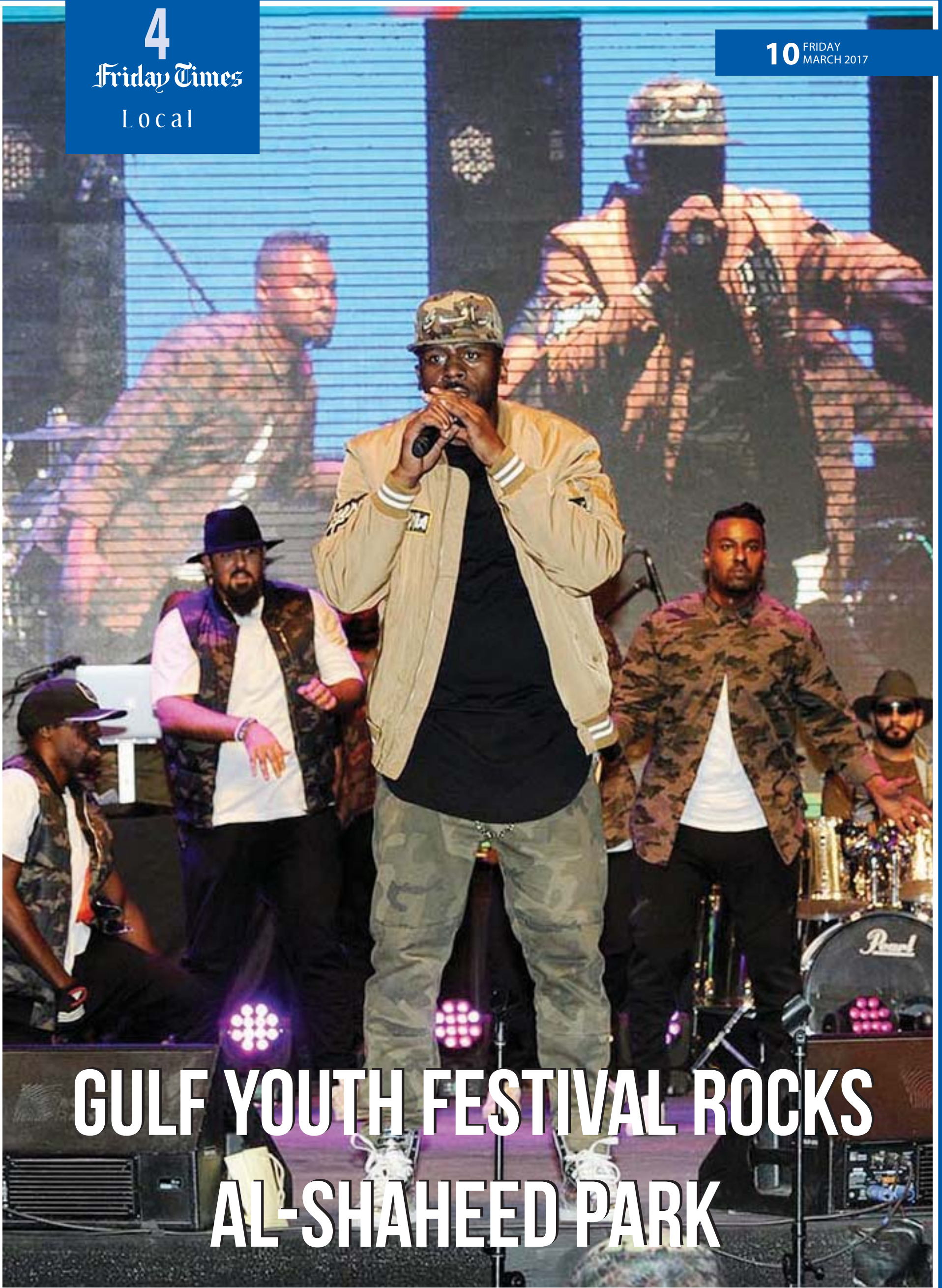
Ibrahim Al-Ashwak, Al-Qallaf, was once a boat builder. With the demise of the maritime economy, demand for his skill dwindled and his focus turned to creating miniatures of traditional dhows, baghlas and booms instead. Om Fayez, the Sadu weaver, maintains her daily weaving ritual but struggles to find much interest in her weavings or in the continuity of this backbreaking craft. Probably the last of the Kuwaiti bisht weavers, Bo Salem laments what he sees as a loss of interest in this astonish-

ingly beautiful traditional garb by a new generation of young Kuwaitis.

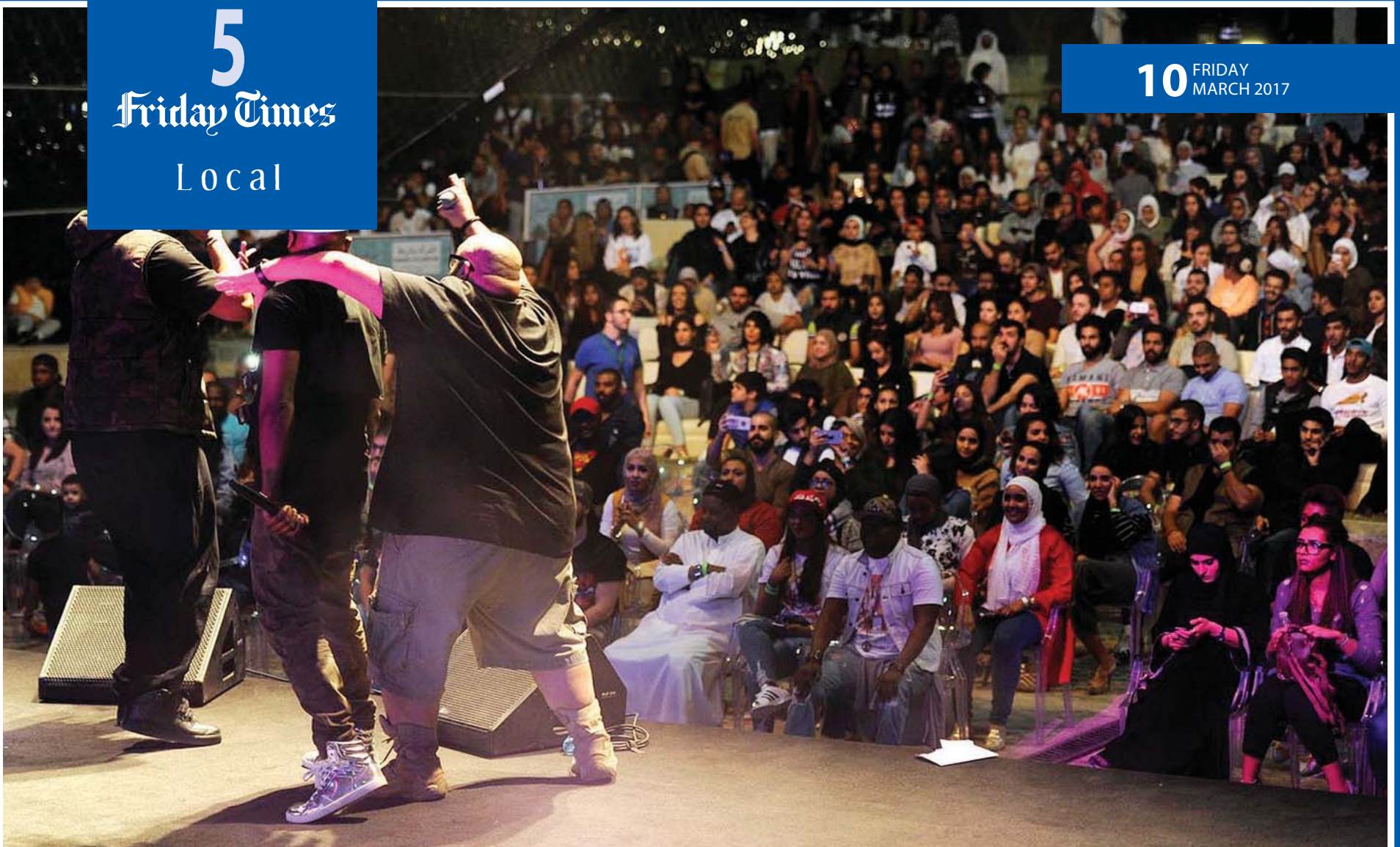
Much emphasis goes into remembering objects, but little on remembering the persons that helped sustain these beautiful crafts. These photographs are a homage to them and to the beauty of the handmade.

About the photographer

Huda Al-Abdulgumhni is a self-taught photographer who from a young age had a passion for portrait photography. In 2009 she began specializing in street portraiture and developing her projects internationally. Huda's camera has been her constant companion through years of living abroad in The Hague, Kuala Lumpur, Paris, Prague and London. Her photographs have been featured in exhibitions including City Projects-WPO in Somerset house, London and publications including Brownbook Magazine's series of portraits of a collective Yemeni wedding. Her portraits of the dates souq in Mubarakiya were published in the Film Shooters Collective's NSEW Book in 2013.



GULF YOUTH FESTIVAL ROCKS AL-SHAHEED PARK



By Ahmad Surour

KUWAIT: Al-Shaheed Park's outdoors theatre witnessed a grand musical show on Wednesday evening, celebrating the launch of the Gulf Youth Festival. The event featured popular local performers including Daffy, Flipperachi, DJ Outlaw, Carol Souki and others. It was organized by LOYAC Academy for Performing Arts (LAPA) in cooperation with Al-Shaheed Park's management. — KUNA



More men in Kuwait turning to plastic surgery to satisfy need for 'perfection'

By Nawara Fattahova

Over the last few years, a perfect-looking face and body have become important for many people, regardless of gender. Just a few years ago, plastic surgery was limited almost exclusively to women, aside from those performed for medical purposes. Most men viewed plastic surgery as a feminine phenomenon due to the conservative nature of our community.

But social media and celebrity culture have played a pivotal role in the rising number of men undergoing plastic surgery, according to Dr Ahmed Hegazy, Plastic Surgery Specialist and Assistant Professor of Plastic Surgery at Boushahri Clinic. "Nowadays, even men want to look perfect," he told Kuwait Times. "About three years back, men accounted for around 10 percent of the patients undergoing plastic surgery or cosmetic procedures. Today, they make up around 30 percent of the patients. Compared to Europe or the United States, the number is still low," he added.

Repeated surgeries

Nasser Al-Traiji, 34, has had 19 medical surgeries and cosmetic procedures. "My kidney has been operated on five times," he said. "In terms of plastic surgery, I have had my nose done twice and hair implanted four times. In fact, I had to undergo rhinoplasty as my nose was broken three times when I was a child. Then I had an accident and couldn't breathe properly."

His first nose job, however, did not go according to plan. "The first time, unfortunately, I had it done here in Kuwait and the Arab doctor did a very bad job that made my breathing even worse. So I went to Iran and had it done there," Traiji told Kuwait Times. The nature of his job led him to get hair implants. "I was employed at an oil company and was frequently exposed to radiation from various machines, which affected my hair and it started falling out. It's not genetic in my family - my father is over 70 and he still has thick hair, as do my mother and grandfather," he explained.

Nasser's social life makes him appear in the media, a fact that is behind his desire to look good. "I think everyone likes to look perfect. If I need more plastic surgery in the future, I will have it done on my face as I get older. On the other hand, I don't agree with weight loss surgery and advise people to lose weight normally through exercise instead," he said. "I also dislike men undergoing surgeries just to imitate some celebrities and not to improve their health or correct deformations." After his unsuccessful attempts at nose and hair surgery, Traiji became extremely careful when looking for a doctor. "I also take patients' experiences and recommendations as a priority," he said.

The most popular surgeries for men are hair implants, rhinoplasties and post-weight loss plastic surgeries. "As well as regular plastic surgeries, more men are now demanding high-definition liposuction (HD lipo) for body sculpting," explained Dr Hegazy. "This is mostly demanded by bodybuilders who consume steroids that cause gynecomastia, the swelling of the breast tissue due to an imbalance of the hormones estrogen and testosterone. It looks bad. Also, steroids lead to fat in areas such as the waist or abdomen, which disappears through exercise."

Skin tightening

Demand for skin-tightening surgery is also on the

Social media and celebrity culture have played a pivotal role in the rising number of men undergoing plastic surgery.

rise. "After having weight loss surgeries, the patient's sudden weight loss can cause the skin to sag. In most cases, it doesn't improve through exercise, so many patients demand skin-tightening plastic surgery. Some even demand buttocks surgery; but they then can't sit without pain because they have lost their natural fat pillow in this area," Dr Hegazy explained.

Wahab, 27, also believes looks are important. He first got his nose done, along with liposuction, when he was 21. "I had my nose done with full anesthesia. At the same time, I also underwent liposuction on my stomach at Royale Hayat Hospital by Dr Reza Nabavian, a visiting doctor who has a clinic in the United States," he noted. He suffered from a symptom that was causing him issues with breathing, a problem the surgery ultimately resolved. "I thought that since I'm doing this, why not remodel my nose that was a little crooked. It was a simple surgery and the doctor didn't break the bone, so I didn't suffer from bruises," Wahab told Kuwait Times.

He described the surgeries as "very simple", given they were performed in a single anesthetic session and did not cause any pain. "I was working a lot at the gym, but my stomach was stubbornly flabby. The doctor told me he could suck the fat through the bellybutton without any scars, which I thought sounded perfect. Then I was on a

strict diet and quit smoking," he added. "I don't need any surgeries right now, but I feel that I may have to regrow some hair soon. I think more men are having plastic surgeries these days. Especially with social media and TV, men are socializing even more than women, so it's competitive in the same way as among women," Wahab noted.



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PUBLIC WORKS EYES SHORTER TIMEFRAME FOR AIRPORT PROJECT

KUWAIT: A project to build a new terminal in Kuwait International Airport will now be completed in four years, down from the initial estimate of six years, Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa said yesterday.

In a statement to the press on the sidelines of a ceremony fettering employees of the Ministry of Public Works for being the recipients of a pair of awards given by the Arab League, Al-Mutawa said

that the ministry will examine the feasibility of a plan to expedite the airport terminal project.

Meanwhile, he noted that the ministry is eager to ensure seamless flow of traffic in the country through a number of pending projects to build new roads. The Minister of Public Works also heaped praise on the ministry for earning the Arab League awards, urging its workforce to strive for further success. — KUNA

THE TRADITIONAL JOB OF AL-GAFFAS 'KUWAIT'S PALM FRONDS-SHAPING WIZARD'

KUWAIT: While most people nowadays struggle to assemble Lego bricks together, the traditional profession of Al-Gaffas, roughly meaning an individual who makes cages, required from a person to manipulate palm fronds into final products such as birdcages, baskets, and even beds.

Working as a gaffas is not a simple matter, it is a job that requires a tremendous amount of creativity, knowledge, and patience, Kuwaiti historian Mohammad Abdulhadi Jamal said.

Regarding the inner workings of the profession, Jamal said that al-gaffas would search for the best material that palm trees could offer, selecting the best fronds and processing them in a certain way for products to be made. He went on saying that what came out from al-gaffas magical hands were numerous house products such as beds, boxes, and birdcages in addition to tools that could be used to transfer goods from and to the market place.

To begin, the white fronds were separated from the stalks before they were completely dry. They were soaked in water to be dyed, then left to dry under the sun, to be soon woven.

Jamal stressed that the profession was not only associated

to crafting cages, it had many other applications. For instance, a major item of palm-weaving in Kuwait was (sufrah), a mat that comes in various shapes and sizes and used for eating on. It was strong enough to be washed by sea water with no harm done to it. They were also used for drying shrimps and some herbs. Another item was hand fans (mahaffa), small ones for personal use in the hot summer, and big ones for grilling, at a barbecue for instance. A third essential product in Kuwaiti houses from palms was a basket (rout), woven from palm fronds or grapes or pomegranates branches, used for keeping clothes.

The list also comprises straw whisks and mats. To weave a mat, a meter by a meter and a half, one needed up to 50 meters of fronds. Skillful Kuwaitis used fronds for baby cradles and malalas (hanging baskets to keep food for the next day), in addition to sieves, scuttles, picture frames, trays and a variety of other items.

Al-Gaffas was not a profession specific to Kuwait, it is also found in other Gulf countries as well as Iraq and Egypt, said the historian. — KUNA



BOGUS MAID OFFICES CLOSED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Residency detectives suspended two domestic help offices for six months for violating law 68/2015. Detectives learned that some licensed offices deal with domestic helpers who are returned to bogus offices and charge citizens and expats for certain periods which is a violation of the law.

Boat mishap

Two boats collided near the Blajat beach resulting in the injury of two persons. Both were treated by paramedics.

Fire in Subhan

Firemen put out a blaze in the MEW warehouse in Subhan area. The fire was in an open area covering 8,000 meters squared but the blaze scorched only around 250 meters of the land. No injuries were reported.

Crime

Report

A CASE OF SPOUSAL VIOLENCE AND OTHER CRIMES

KUWAIT: A citizen accused her Saudi husband of beating her and her pregnant sister with intention to make her miscarry. The citizen said she was walking with her sister who is five months pregnant when her Saudi husband stopped and beat them before passersby stopped him. Policemen and paramedics arrived at the scene.

Child saved from choking

Paramedics rescued a child who got a coin stuck in his throat. The child was playing at home when he swallowed the coin. Paramedics rushed to the scene and saved the child by extracting the coin.

A maid absconded after threatening messages

A Filipina escaped from her sponsor's house after she was discovered to have written messages threatening to harm her sponsor. The Kuwaiti sponsor checked her maid's phone and had translated several messages so that she could know what they said. She was surprised to find that the messages included comments by the maid threatening to hurt the sponsor. When she confronted the domestic helper, the woman absconded. The sponsor went to Yarmouk police station and complained.

Hit and run

Capital detectives are looking for a person who ran over an Iranian near Shuwaikh port, causing him head injuries and escaped. Paramedics rushed the victim to Amiri hospital.

Drug abuser arrested

A national on drugs was arrested following a domestic disturbance at his home. His family called the police, who went to the house and arrested the man.

Maid thief arrested

Police arrested a citizen for "stealing" a maid from her sponsor in Hawally. Police stopped a car with a woman inside who was found wanted by Taima area detectives for the theft of the maid. She was taken to the police station to face legal charges.

Harassers arrested

Capital detectives arrested five citizens who harassed girls in a mall and assaulted a guard, one of the suspects was found wanted to serve a five year jail sentence in drug and fight cases. The five were caught by security guards and kept in a room but were able to escape after beating a guard. The guard lodged a complaint which was referred to detectives who made the arrests.

Dog bites man

A citizen who complained about the barking of his neighbor's dog had his clothes torn and was bitten. The citizen who lives in Salwa complained many times to the dog's owner to no avail. Then the dog attacked the citizen, bit him and tore his clothes. The citizen went to Mubarak hospital then lodged a complaint of negligence against the owner for his failure to care properly for the animal.

Bike accident

A girl sustained various fractures during an accident over her motorcycle in Kabd area. Paramedics rushed the 17-year-old national to Farwaniya hospital. She said she lost control and the bike flipped over.

Driver beats woman

A driver who had a traffic dispute with a lady over the right of way, beat her in Qurain area. The woman, a national, was with her child when the man stopped and beat her before driving off. Detectives are looking for the suspect.

1,000 US TROOPS TO KUWAIT TO FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIC STATE

Continued from Page 1

Pentagon leaders sent a new plan to defeat IS to the White House late last month. It outlined a strategy that would likely increase the number of U.S. troops in Syria in order to better advise and enable the US-backed Syrian fighters who will take on the battle for Raqqa. The military has mapped out a series of options for the Syria fight, including increased artillery support, more Apache helicopters and a more robust training campaign.

US officials say the battle for Raqqa will look much like the fight in neighboring Iraq, where local forces are in a fierce battle to retake the northern city of Mosul from IS. As troops were preparing to move into Mosul, the US set up bases outside the city to use as logistical hubs and as locations for heavy artillery.

Kuwait deployment

The Kuwait deployment is likely intended to pre-position US troops closer to the fight, so they can be tapped as needed, are the kinds of decisions that military commanders say they need to be able to make more quickly, without going to the White House every time for approval.

Up to 6,000 US troops are currently deployed in Iraq and Syria, mostly as advisers. "This is about providing options," an official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told Reuters regarding the reported plan. The new deployment would provide US commanders on the ground with more flexibility to respond immediately to unforeseen challenges on the battlefield.

Also, according to officials, the decision on whether to use the Kuwait-based reserve force would be left to local commanders - a drastic change in the way the fight against terrorists in the region is handled, as the Obama administration tended to micromanage the details of the war against ISIS. Reuters' sources also said the potential deployment would differ from the existing US troop presence in Kuwait. Located on Iraq's southeastern border, Kuwait has been a staunch ally of the US since 1991, when US forces spearheaded a campaign to drive occupying Iraqi troops out of the country, in what has come to be known as the first Gulf War.

According to Military Bases.com, there are currently eight US Army bases in Kuwait. Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis declined to comment on the options which are being discussed by the Trump administration regarding the fight against ISIS. —Agencies



KUWAIT: File photo shows the Sawaber complex in Kuwait City which the government plans to demolish to build financial and possibly residential buildings. — Photo by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

FINAL WARNING TO SAWABER RESIDENTS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The State property department announced that Al-Sawaber complex must be evacuated starting next week under the administrative evacuation law. State property department gave residents of 15 flats, whose owners are refusing to hand over three days to process transactions related to reclaiming and receive their financial dues.

For years, the government has sought means of emptying the complex of residents in order to have it demolished. The Cabinet issued a decree for the removal of all remaining residents by March 31, 2016. Built in 1981 with designs by famed architect and urban planner Arthur Erickson, Al-Sawaber represents a distinct architectural, economic and cultural period in Kuwaiti history. One of the first high density complexes in the country. Located on approximately 245,000 square meters of prime real estate property in the heart of Kuwait's financial district, the complex includes 33 buildings and more than 520 residential apartments.



INTERIOR TRAINEES GRADUATE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and presence of Acting Interior Ministry Undersecretary, Maj Gen Mahmoud Al-Dousary, Director General of Special Security Forces Maj Gen Shukri Al-Najjar and Director of Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute Abdelaziz Al-Sharikh, the Directorate General of Special Security Forces celebrated the graduation of six batches of specialized training courses from VIP protection, training center, and special units in which 57 trainees participated including nine from Arab countries besides 15 trainees from the foreign ministry.



MP PROPOSES BAN ON GOVT MEDICINE FOR EXPATS

By A Staff Reporter

KUWAIT: MP Safa Al-Hashem yesterday continued targeting expatriates in Kuwait with hostile proposals by calling on authorities to stop giving medicines at public clinics and hospitals to foreign patients.

Hashem, the only woman in the 50-member national assembly, said in the latest proposal that the KD 1 and KD 2 fees expatriates pay at clinics and hospitals, respectively, should be considered as a doctor's fee without including drugs.

Under the current system, the fee expatriates patients pay entitles them to see the doctor, receive medication and conduct almost totally free laboratory tests. In her proposal, Hashem called for making the drugs at clinics and public hospitals exclusively for Kuwaiti patients and that expatriates should buy their medicines from private pharmacies and drug stores.

She said her proposal would save large quantities of drugs which account for a huge budget from the government. It would also resolve crowding at public clinics and hospitals and also benefit the private medical sector.

Expatriates pay a mandatory annual health insurance fee of KD 50 per person per year. Payment of this fee is a precondition to obtain or renew the residence permit. In addition, expatriates pay charges for a long list of medical services especially x-ray and radiology services, surgeries, sleeping at hospitals and for some laboratory tests and examina-

tions. They are also often not allowed more than basic medicines and many higher cost medicines are already restricted, in practice, to nationals only.

The health ministry has said it plans to raise the charges of medical services for expatriates very soon.

Hashem has been targeting expatriates with hostile proposals since she was elected to the new national assembly last November. Some rights activists and writers described her anti-expatriate proposals as "racist".

Several weeks ago, she called for imposing taxes and high charges on expatriates and "make them pay for walking on roads". She later called for banning expatriates from using inten-

sive care units at public hospitals saying that "they consume the oxygen at the units". Hashem had previously called for sharply reducing the number of expatriates to be equal to Kuwaitis within five years.

At present, there are 3.1 million expatriates against 1.35 million Kuwaiti citizens. The government had said that it is impossible to reduce the number of expatriates to this level.

Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh said last month that the strategy of the ministerial demographic committee calls to reduce the number of expatriates at a much slower pace to become 60 percent of the population by 2030, down from the current 70 percent.



MP Safa Al-Hashem entering the National Assembly this week. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

International

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017

Syria strikes kill over 20 near IS stronghold



'World's heaviest woman' loses 100 kg



Two Malaysians leave N Korea; nine stranded



MOSUL: Iraqi civilians walk toward Iraqi security forces after fleeing their homes due to fighting between government forces and Islamic State militants on the western side of Mosul yesterday. (Inset) The leader of the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, Aka Caliph Ibrahim.— AP / AFP

IS LEADER BAGHDADI 'FLEES MOSUL'

LOCAL COMMANDERS TO BATTLE ADVANCING IRAQI FORCES

MOSUL: Islamic State group chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is reported to have abandoned Mosul, leaving local commanders behind to lead the battle against Iraqi forces advancing in the city. With Iraqi troops making steady progress in their assault to retake Mosul from the jihadists, a US defense official said Baghdadi had fled to avoid being trapped inside.

It was the latest sign that IS is feeling the pressure from twin US-backed offensives that have seen it lose much of the territory it once controlled in Iraq and Syria. Speaking to reporters in Washington, the defense official said Baghdadi had left Mosul before Iraqi forces seized control of a key road at the beginning of this month, isolating the jihadists in the city.

"He was in Mosul at some point before the offensive.... He left before we isolated Mosul and Tal Afar," a town to the west, the official said. "He probably gave broad strategic guidance and has left it to battlefield commanders." Baghdadi, who declared IS's cross-border "caliphate" at a Mosul mosque in 2014, in an audio message in November urged supporters to make a stand in the city rather than "retreating in shame".

Iraq launched the offensive to retake Mosul which involves tens of thousands of soldiers, police and allied militia fighters in October.

After recapturing its eastern side, the forces

set their sights on the city's smaller but more densely populated west.

In recent days Iraqi forces have retaken a series of neighborhoods in west Mosul as well as the provincial government headquarters and a museum where IS militants filmed themselves destroying priceless artefacts. The military said Wednesday they had also taken the infamous Badush prison northwest of Mosul where IS reportedly executed hundreds of people and held captured Yazidi women.

On Thursday Iraqi forces were "combing the city centre area to defuse (bombs in) homes and shops and buildings," Lieutenant Colonel Abdulmir Al-Mohammedawi of Iraq's elite Rapid Response Division told AFP.

Forces were also "searching for snipers in the city centre," Mohammedawi said.

The area is located on the edge of Mosul's Old City, a warren of narrow streets and closely spaced houses that could see some of the toughest fighting of the battle. "Currently there is no order from the operations command to advance toward the Old City. We will advance when this order is issued," Mohammedawi said.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians are believed to still be trapped under IS rule in Mosul. Those who did manage to escape the city said the jihadists were growing increasingly desperate. — AFP

EMIRATES CONCERNED ABOUT LATEST US TRAVEL ORDER

BERLIN: Emirates, the world's largest long-haul carrier, said yesterday it was concerned President Donald Trump's latest travel order will still deter Muslim visitors to America, after booking rates on US flights fell 35 percent following January's ban. Trump signed a new executive order on Monday, which takes effect on March 16, keeping a 90-day ban on travel to the US by citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

However, the order applies only to new visa applicants, meaning about 60,000 people whose visas were revoked by the previous order will now be permitted to enter. It also removed Iraq from the list.

"I am concerned. It's the tone of it. We have brought millions of Muslims to the United States, but now they may not feel welcome, they may look at going on holiday elsewhere," President Tim Clark told journalists in Berlin on the sidelines of the ITB travel fair. Akbar Al Baker, the chief executive of Gulf rival Qatar Airways, said on Wednesday his airline had not seen a drop in demand for US flights.

"I make sure that when I deploy my planes, they are full, that the passengers are allowed to go into and out of a country," he said. Demand for travel to the United States over the coming months has flattened with flights to and from the Middle East the hardest hit, a study released by travel analysis company ForwardKeys showed on Monday.

The January order caused chaos and confusion at airports worldwide, with the airline industry complaining about a lack of clear and direct communication from US officials.

Emirates, which flies to 11 US cities, has not fully recovered from the original Jan. 27 travel ban, suspended on Feb 3. "The effect it had was instantaneous," Clark said. He said the revised order issued this week offered more clarity, and there had been some positive movement in bookings on the Emirates network but not a full recovery.

"When will it recapture the original booking curve is anyone's guess," he said, adding that he hoped for an improvement in the summer after the usually quiet period during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan. — Reuters

SURVIVING ON THE FRONT LINE IN MOSUL'S STREET BATTLES

MOSUL: Mohammed Fathi sat calmly on a plastic chair, twiddling his prayer beads as machine gun fire erupted from a neighbor's house, incoming bullets crackled overhead and helicopters strafed targets nearby in western Mosul. The 70-year-old grandfather of 10 looked relieved. The day before, death had come much closer.

He described how Islamic State fighters had used the top floor of his home to fire sniper rifles and BKC machine guns at advancing Iraqi forces, while Fathi's family and others displaced by the violence cowered downstairs. If the militants had held out a few minutes longer, an air raid would have brought the building down on top of them.

"Thank God, they retreated from here and troops arrived to find just us. "One of the soldiers told us they were five minutes away from calling in an air strike because of the resistance coming from our house," he said. Fathi, wearing a red and white headscarf, hobbled around his home pointing at damage the Islamic State fighters had done to his property - a children's cupboard smashed up to use as barricades and to rest rifles on, a basket upturned to stand on while they fired at the enemy.

The fighters, some of whom spoke Russian, left their posts in the upstairs bedrooms and retreated through the next-door house via holes they had knocked through the walls, Fathi said.

"As the soldiers arrived, we weren't sure if Daesh (Islamic State) were still there. My son went up to check, and they'd gone." The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) entered the home around sunset on Monday, and on Tuesday were stationed outside in armored vehicles, or firing from adjacent buildings at Islamic State positions along the shifting front line.

Fighting to drive Islamic State from western Mosul, its last major stronghold in Iraq, has involved close-quarter street battles, with Iraqi forces advancing block by block as they approach the most densely populated parts of the city.

Battle positions

Fathi's home is one of many that Islamic State fighters have used as battle positions as they withdraw towards the city centre, taking cover among the 750,000 civilians in western Mosul.

US-backed Iraqi forces recaptured eastern Mosul in January, and attacked districts west of the river Tigris on Feb. 19. Advances have sometimes slowed to try to avoid civilian casualties, while Islamic State has used suicide car bombs and snipers. "Daesh are retreating house by house, and they're also using tunnels they've dug to escape," said CTS Corporal Marwan Hashem, stationed in the house next door to Fathi.

"They take up rooftop positions on homes to shoot." CTS troops and Federal Police units that joined them later on Tuesday were using holes the militants had knocked through to move back and forth, and huddled in a courtyard as they planned their next attack.

Members of Hashem's unit said they were confident the Mansour district would be recaptured from Islamic State in a matter of hours. But the militants were putting up stiff resistance. — Reuters



BERLIN: A humanitarian aid worker of German relief organization 'Schueler Helfen Leben' (Students help life) gathers yesterday in front of the Bundestag (German parliament) during the 'Our hands are tied' action on the sixth anniversary of the Syrian crisis. — AFP



ALEPPO: Syrian government forces advance on the eastern outskirts of Aleppo on Wednesday near the town of Al-Khafsah, where regime forces retook a key water pumping station the day before. —AFP

SYRIA STRIKES KILL OVER 20 NEAR IS STRONGHOLD

US ADDS TO FORCES IN SYRIA TO EXPEDITE IS DEFEAT

BEIRUT: At least 20 civilians, including some children, were killed in suspected US-coalition airstrikes on a village east of the Islamic State group's de-facto capital in Syria, activists reported yesterday. The report comes as the militants come under mounting pressure by rival US-backed and Russian-backed forces working to seize the capital, Raqqa. Also yesterday, engineers restored two water pumping stations that feed water to the country's largest city, Aleppo, in territory captured by the Syrian government from IS militants this week, state media reported.

Aleppo, once Syria's industrial capital, suffered for years from severe water shortages as the government and opposition fighters contested the city and the Islamic State group controlled its upstream source - the pumping stations at the town of Khafseh on the Euphrates River. Pro-government forces defeated the rebels in the city just before the new year and took Khafseh from IS militants earlier this week. Residents in Aleppo have depended on wells and water deliveries arranged by the government, charities and the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF.

Imad Al-Khal, 64, a resident of al-Aziziyeh neighborhood in Aleppo, told The Associated Press that municipal water hasn't reached her home in nine weeks. In the area east of Raqqa, the activist group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently reported at least 20 civilians were killed in airstrikes Wednesday night on Matab Village. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, however, said the strikes occurred before dawn Tuesday and killed 23 people, including eight children.

It was not possible to reconcile the two accounts - the Islamic State group maintains a tight grip on communications from its territory. The Observatory and RBSS get their information from closely guarded local contacts.

US aid

A US Marines artillery unit has been deployed to Syria in recent days to help local forces speed up efforts to defeat Islamic State at Raqqa and the campaign to isolate the city is going "very, very well", the US-led coalition said yesterday.

Coalition spokesman US Air Force Colonel John Dorrian said the additional US forces would be working with local partners in Syria - the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Syrian Arab Coalition - and would not have a front line role. The additional deployment

comprises a total of 400 US forces - both Marines and Army Rangers. It adds to around 500 US military personnel already in Syria, Dorrian said.

The SDF, which includes the Kurdish YPG militia, is the main US partner in the war against Islamic State insurgents in Syria. Since November it has been working with the US-led coalition to encircle Raqqa, IS's main urban bastion in Syria. This week, the SDF cut the road between Raqqa and the jihadists' stronghold of Deir al-Zor province - the last main road out of the city. —Agencies

SAUDI-LED COALITION USED CLUSTER BOMBS IN YEMEN: AMNESTY

DUBAI: Amnesty International yesterday accused the Saudi-led Arab coalition battling rebels in Yemen of using banned cluster munitions in raids on residential areas.

The Brazilian-manufactured munitions were fired in a February 15 attack on three residential districts and agricultural land in Saada province of northern Yemen, a stronghold of the Shiite Houthi rebels, it said in a statement. Two people were wounded in the attack, said Amnesty, which has also reported that the coalition used cluster munitions in October 2015 and May of last year.

The coalition "absurdly justifies its use of cluster munitions by claiming it is in line with international law, despite concrete evidence of the human cost to civilians caught up in the conflict", said Lynn Maalouf, research director at Amnesty's Beirut regional office.

"Cluster munitions are inherently indiscriminate weapons that inflict unimaginable harm on civilian lives," she said. Amnesty called for Brazil "to join the Convention on Cluster

Munitions and for Saudi Arabia and coalition members to stop all use of cluster munition". Separately, Human Rights Watch in December accused the coalition of firing Brazilian-made rockets containing the outlawed munitions near two schools in Saada, killing two civilians and wounding six including a child. The December 6 came a day after Saudi Arabia joined the US and Brazil in abstaining from a UN General Assembly vote that overwhelmingly endorsed an international ban on cluster bomb use.

The weapons can contain dozens of smaller bomblets that disperse over large areas, often continuing to kill and maim civilians long after they are dropped. The Saudi-led coalition, which has come under repeated criticism over civilian casualties in Yemen, acknowledged in December it had made "limited use" of British-made cluster bombs but said it had stopped using them.

The conflict in Yemen has left more than 7,400 dead and 40,000 wounded since the coalition intervened on the government's side in March 2015, according to the UN. —AFP

KREMLIN DENIES VIOLATING NUKE ARMS PACT WITH US

MOSCOW: The Kremlin yesterday rejected US claims of Russian violations of a landmark nuclear arms treaty, saying it has respected the pact and will continue to do so.

The controversy over the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty adds another thorn in the side for US President Donald Trump's declared goal of improving ties with Moscow, coming at a time when his administration is facing questions over alleged contacts with Russia during the US election campaign. Gen. Paul Selva, vice chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, on Wednesday accused Russia of deploying a land-based cruise missile in violation of "the spirit and

intent" of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty. He said that Moscow's intention is to threaten US facilities in Europe and the NATO alliance.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded that "we disagree with and reject any such accusations." "Russia has adhered to and will adhere to all its international obligations, including those under the INF Treaty," he said in a conference call with reporters.

The INF Treaty bans an entire class of weapons - all land-based cruise missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers (310 and 3,410 miles).

The Obama administration had accused

Moscow of violating the INF treaty, but Selva's statement marked the first public confirmation of recent news reports that the Russians have deployed the nuclear-capable cruise missile.

During earlier bickering over the INF Treaty, Russia has sought to turn the tables on the US with claims of perceived US violations. Trump has said little about the INF treaty, but he has criticized another arms pact, the 2010 New START nuclear arms reduction treaty that limited the US and Russian nuclear arsenals to no more than 1,550 deployed warheads for each country, saying it offers Russia an advantage. The bickering over the treaty comes at a time

when Russia-US ties have plunged to their lowest point since the Cold War over the Ukrainian crisis, the war in Syria and other disputes. US allies in Europe have voiced concern about what they perceived as aggressive Russian intentions and its military buildup. Moscow has responded with its own grievances, saying the US-led missile defense and the deployment of NATO's forces near Russian borders threaten Russia's security. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said after talks in Moscow with his German counterpart Sigmar Gabriel that Russia is only responding to "being encircled with NATO's weapons and NATO's units." — AFP



TUNIS: Tunisian Prime Minister Youssef Chahed (left) greets his Algerian counterpart Abdelmalek Sellal (right) yesterday in Tunis. — AFP

ALGERIA'S PRESIDENT DOING 'VERY WELL': PM

TUNIS: Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who has rarely appeared in public since a crippling stroke in 2013, is doing "very well", the country's prime minister said yesterday.

Speculation has mounted about the veteran president's health since he suffered a bout of bronchitis in February, forcing German Chancellor Angela Merkel to cancel a scheduled visit to Algiers at the last minute. But asked about it during a visit to Tunis, Prime Minister Abdelmalek Sellal, said: "He sends you his greetings and is doing very well." Bouteflika, who turned 80 on March 2, has been in power since 1999. He was elected to a fourth term in 2014 but attended his inauguration in a wheelchair and was barely able to deliver more than a few paragraphs of his speech and mumble through the oath of office.

Since then, he has rarely appeared in public, receiving foreign heads of state or government in privacy at his official residence in Zeralda, west of the capital. During his visit to Tunis, Sellal held talks with President Beji Caid Essebsi and Prime Minister Youssef Chahed and signed several agreements, including on security cooperation. — AFP

TWO SHOT DEAD IN STOCKHOLM SUBURB

STOCKHOLM: The fatal shooting of two men in their 20s is the latest incident in suburban feuds between criminal gangs fighting over territory, police in Stockholm said yesterday, calling the situation "alarming and very serious." The men were shot dead late Wednesday while sitting in a car in a residential area of Kista, northwest of the Swedish capital.

In 2017 alone there have been 17 shooting episodes in Stockholm with seven dead - including five this week - and 14 injured, local police chief Ulf Johansson said. He added attacks have included the use of Kalashnikov-style rifles and hand grenades. "These are young men with access to weapons," Johansson said, adding there are up to 12 conflicts in the Stockholm area between criminal gangs over drug markets and territory. — AFP

US RELATIONS AT RISK IF KURDS HELP RETAKE RAQQA: TURKEY

ANKARA VIEWS YPG AS TERROR ORGANIZATION

ANKARA: The United States risks major damage to its relationship with NATO ally Turkey if the US includes Kurdish forces in the fight to retake Raqqa, the Islamic State group's de facto capital, Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said yesterday.

Turkey and the US are locked in a heated dispute about US plans to liberate Raqqa, with Turkey insisting its own military and allied forces in Syria should mount the fight and that US-backed Syrian Kurds should be excluded.

Though the US has been hoping to include both Turkey and the battle-hardened Kurdish forces, Yildirim insisted Turkey wouldn't be part of any operation including the Syrian Kurdish force known as the YPG, considered by Ankara to be terrorists who threaten Turkey's security.

"If the US were to prefer terrorist organizations over Turkey in the fight against IS, that would be their own decision, but that wouldn't be something we would consent" to, Yildirim told The Associated Press. The prime minister also took issue with President Donald Trump's use of the phrase "radical Islamic terrorism" and said "we would be actually happy if our friends were to be a bit more cautious about this issue."

In an earlier exchange with visiting foreign journalists, Yildirim said ties between the two countries would be significantly undermined, though he declined to name any specific steps Turkey - a member of the US-led coalition fighting IS - might take in response. In the past, Turkey has hinted it could cut off access to Incirlik air base, home to coalition warplanes.

Though no decision has been formally announced, the US has been sending signals that it is inclined to rely on the Kurdish forces, who have proven the most effective local force at battling IS. US officials have said that Turkey, which has troops in Syria and is aiding other Syrian opposition fighters, has thus far failed to show that it has a force sufficiently large and capable to liberate Raqqa, the largest remaining IS stronghold.

Yildirim insisted Turkey has proven its mettle, pointing to victories by its Operation Euphrates Shield in liberating northern Syrian towns of Jarabulus and al-Bab. Yet in al-Bab, in particular, Turkish troops and allied Syrian fighters suffered heavy casualties in a grueling three-month



ANKARA: Turkey's Prime Minister Binali Yildirim speaks to a group of foreign journalists in Ankara yesterday. — AP

fight to liberate the city from IS. "They know what our capabilities are," Yildirim said. "We've exchanged military info, and diplomatically speaking this message was also passed along." Turkey views the main Kurdish force - the People's Protection Units, or YPG - to be terrorists because of their ties to Turkey's outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which the US also considers to be a terrorist group. But the top American commander for the fight against IS has said he's seen "zero evidence" the YPG has posed a recent threat to Turkey.

Yildirim said Turkey is still awaiting a US decision on Raqqa, and there are signs such a decision could come soon. The top US, Russian and Turkish generals met this week to discuss Syria, and the US disclosed Wednesday it has deployed a couple hundred Marines into Syria with heavy artillery in preparation for the Raqqa operation.

Frustrated by former President Barack

Obama's approach in the final years of his term, Turkey has been cautious in its approach to the new Trump administration while voicing optimism that relations with the U.S. will improve. Yildirim declined to criticize Trump's revised order temporarily banning immigration from six majority-Muslim nations - Turkey is not one of them - but did suggest Trump should cease linking Islam to terrorism in his public comments. He suggested that when Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has his first meeting with Trump, he would raise objections to Trump's use of phrases like "radical Islamic terrorism."

"This is simply divisive language," Yildirim said. "Because if you mention one particular religion in the same sentence as terrorism, then the followers of that faith - which in this case is 2 billion people - they will be disturbed, and this is not the right thing to do." — AP

BRITISH MPs TO DISCUSS BILL TO TRIGGER BREXIT MONDAY

LONDON: British MPs will meet on Monday to discuss amendments made to a bill empowering Prime Minister Theresa May to trigger Brexit, with further debate possible on Tuesday and Wednesday, the government said.

The legislation is a requirement from the Supreme Court, which said that May needs lawmakers' approval to be able to invoke Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty, the formal procedure for leaving the bloc. The House of Commons will discuss changes to the bill made by the House of Lords, particularly for granting permanent

residency rights to EU nationals living in Britain and giving parliament a final say on Brexit.

Brexit minister David Davis said the government, which holds a majority in the Commons but not in the Lords, would oppose the changes as they were "unnecessary".

But some Conservative MPs could vote in favor. The amendments are expected by commentators to be voted down, meaning the bill would go back to the House of Lords for final approval and then to Queen Elizabeth II for her assent.

Keir Starmer, the main opposition Labour Party's chief Brexit spokesman, told parliament that May was planning to invoke Article 50 on Wednesday or Thursday. The government has only said that she plans to do so by the end of March, after which the EU has said it will respond with its strategy within 48 hours. Davis said the need for post-Brexit transitional arrangements to make Britain's exit smoother would "undoubtedly" be part of early talks with Brussels. But he added: "If you don't know where you are going to end up you can't have a transitional arrangement". — Agencies



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SAN JOSE PINULA: Relatives cry outside the children's shelter Virgen de la Asuncion after a fire at the facility killed at least 22 people, in San Jose Pinula. — AFP

FIRE AT GUATEMALA SHELTER KILLS 22 GIRLS POLICE BLAME ARSON

SAN JOSE PINULA: A fire tore through a home for abused teenagers and children in Guatemala, killing at least 22 girls on Wednesday after some residents set mattresses ablaze following an overnight attempt to escape from the overcrowded center, police said. A crowd of relatives, some wailing with grief, gathered outside the government-run Virgen de Asuncion home for youths aged up to 18, in San Jose Pinula, 25 km southwest of the capital, Guatemala City.

Hospitals reported about 40 people being treated for burns. The blaze started when a group of young people who had been isolated by authorities after a riot and an escape attempt at the center on Tuesday night set fire to mattresses, said Nery Ramos, head of Guatemala's national police.

Authorities were investigating whether those who started the blaze were the ones who had tried to escape, Ramos added. "What happened is extremely serious, and even more so for the fact that it could have been avoided," Anabella Morfin, Guatemala's solicitor general, told a news conference. "This should never have happened."

Burnt bodies partially covered in blankets were strewn across the floor of a blackened room in the home, pictures posted to Twitter by firefighters showed. "We will fully support the institutions responsible for investigating, and we will contribute to finding the truth," President Jimmy Morales said in a brief statement on national television Wednesday night. Morales earlier declared three days of national mourning. Mayra Veliz, secretary general of the attorney general's office, pledged a transparent investigation into the cause of the blaze. She said a group of disabled girls had been bused to another shelter as detectives scoured the site. Plagued by Latin America's worst rates of child malnutrition and street gangs like the Mara Salvatrucha that often prey on minors, Guatemala can be a traumatic place to grow up. Conditions in the Central American nation's public institutions are often dismal with widespread overcrowding.

Distraught relatives

On Tuesday night, riot police went in to quell unrest over the home's conditions. Dozens of residents escaped, but 54 were recaptured and isolated, Ramos said. The Virgen de Asuncion home has long suffered from overcrowding, with Guatemalan media reporting that more than 500 people were crammed into the center designed to house 400. Distraught relatives said abuse was common at the center, which is run by the Ministry for Social Welfare, and presidential spokesman Heinz Heimann condemned what he described as the shelter's open living arrangements. "It shouldn't be possible that girls who simply were suffering, that didn't have any problems with the law, are mixed with young people who have committed crimes," Heimann said.

"This can't be allowed to continue." Domestic worker Alicia Lopez, 50, had been outside the home for hours trying to find out what happened to her autistic 12-year-old son who came to the center with a drug addiction. She said he had been raped there last week. "I still don't have information. ... I want justice for him," Lopez said at the home, which takes in abandoned children as well as victims of abuse and trafficking.

Andrea Palomo told reporters in tears that she had brought her 15-year-old son to the home to discipline him. He told her he was mistreated and complained that gang members there tattooed the children, she said. Guatemala's ombudsman for human rights decides whether children are placed in the home and some parents praised it. Cristina Puac, 59, said her adopted teenage daughter Gladys was placed there for being rebellious and aggressive, and stealing things. "When I came to see her, everything seemed fine," she said. "She never complained about anything." — Reuters

CIA BLASTS WIKILEAKS

WIKILEAKS ACCUSED OF ENDANGERING AMERICANS, HELPING US RIVALS

WASHINGTON: The Central Intelligence Agency has accused WikiLeaks of endangering Americans, helping US rivals and hampering the fight against terror threats by releasing what the anti-secrecy site claimed was a trove of CIA hacking tools. A CIA spokeswoman would not confirm the authenticity of the materials published by WikiLeaks, which said they were leaked from the spy agency's hacking operations.

Nevertheless, said spokeswoman Heather Fritz Horniak, "The American public should be deeply troubled by any WikiLeaks disclosure designed to damage the intelligence community's ability to protect America against terrorists and other adversaries." "Such disclosures not only jeopardize US personnel and operations, but also equip our adversaries with tools and information to do us harm," she said. Horniak defended the CIA's cyber operations, which the WikiLeaks materials showed focused heavily on breaking into personal electronics using a wide range of malware systems. "It is CIA's job to be innovative, cutting-edge, and the first line of defense in protecting this country from enemies abroad," she said.

Massive leak

On Tuesday, WikiLeaks published nearly 9,000 documents it said were part of a huge trove leaked from the CIA, describing it as the largest-ever publication of secret intelligence materials. "This extraordinary collection, which amounts to more than several hundred million lines of code, gives its possessor the entire hacking capacity of the CIA," it said. The documents showed that CIA hackers can turn a TV into a listening device, bypass popular encryption apps, and possibly control one's car.

Most experts believe the materials to be genuine, and US media said Wednesday that the Federal Bureau of Investigation is opening a criminal probe into the leak. The source of the materials remained unclear. The investigation could focus on whether the CIA was sloppy in its controls, or, as The Washington Post reported, it could be "a major mole hunt" for a malicious leaker or turncoat inside the agency. WikiLeaks itself said the documents, hacking tools and code came from an archive that had circulated among US government hackers and private contractors.

An investigation would come as the CIA is already enmeshed in a politically-charged probe into Russia's alleged interference in the US election last year in support of President Donald Trump's campaign. WikiLeaks, which has stunned the US government with a series of publications of top secret political, diplomatic and intelligence materials, said the publication Tuesday was only the first of a series of releases of CIA hacking materials. That raised concerns that the site could release the actual hacking tools it obtained along with the documents. Experts worry those could fall into the hands of anyone, including US enemies and criminals.

Tech sector scrambles

The WikiLeaks documents detailed the CIA's practice of exploiting vulnerabilities in hardware and software, without ever informing producers of them. The CIA allegedly found ways to hack into personal electronics from leading companies like Apple and Samsung, Android phones, popular Microsoft soft-



LANGLEY: This file photo shows a man walking over the seal of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the lobby of CIA Headquarters in Langley, Virginia. — AP

ware, and crucial routers from major manufacturers. The documents suggest it can also infiltrate smartphones in a way that allows it to get around popular messaging encryption apps.

The tech sector was scrambling to understand how their products were at risk. "While our initial analysis indicates that many of the issues leaked today were already patched in the latest iOS, we will continue work to rapidly address any identified vulnerabilities," Apple said in an emailed statement. "We're confident that security updates and protections in both Chrome and Android already shield users from many of these alleged vulnerabilities," Google director of information security and privacy Heather Adkins said in a released statement. "Our analysis is ongoing and we will implement any further necessary protections." Samsung and Microsoft both said they were "looking into" what WikiLeaks revealed.

Encryption apps safe

Joseph Hall, a technologist with the Center for Democracy and Technology, a digital rights organization, said the documents raise questions about the US government's pledge last year to disclose vulnerabilities to technology firms. That pledge means "security flaws should get back to the companies so they can get fixed, and not languish for years," he said. The American Civil Liberties Union commented in a tweet: "When the govt finds software security holes, it should help fix them, not hoard them and leave everyone vulnerable."

Companies that make encryption programs and apps targeted by the CIA said the revelations show the agency has not been able to break their software. Open Whisper Systems, which developed the technology for the Signal encryption app, said the CIA documents showed that Signal works. "None of the exploits are in Signal or break Signal Protocol encryption," the group said in a tweet. "The existence of these hacking tools is a testimonial to the strength of the encryption," said Steve Bellovin, a Columbia University computer science researcher, in a blog post. — AFP

AFTER RAPE, PREGNANCY, SENEGAL 'PINK HOUSE' HELPS WOMEN TO REBUILD LIVES

DAKAR: When Binta found out she was pregnant, she knew she would have to leave her home in southern Senegal. Pregnancy outside of marriage is taboo in the West African nation and abortions are punishable by jail. The father of Binta's child was an extended family member, she said, not specifying whether their relations were consensual.

"I didn't know how to tell my family about this... The family is too sacred," the 30-year-old said. Her name and those of other women interviewed by the Thomson Reuters Foundation have been changed to protect their privacy. So Binta made up an elaborate story about finding a job and packed her bags for Guediawaye, a poor suburb on the outskirts of capital Dakar, where a social worker had told her she could find refuge at the Maison Rose, French for "pink house".

An old court building with pink-painted walls, the Maison Rose is a rare refuge in Senegal for women and girls who have

fled abuse, rape, forced marriage and other trauma. Hundreds of people have found sanctuary there in its nine years. "Anything that can happen in Senegal, we've seen it," said French founder Mona Chasserio, who has given the shelter a warm and homely feel. Most women come to see out unexpected pregnancies and give birth, she said. Now Chasserio is broadening its impact by including more job training programmes to help the women gain economic independence when they leave. The shelter also teaches community leaders how to handle sensitive cases and guide women toward support.

The Maison Rose aims to help women recover from psychological trauma through music, art, and other types of therapy. The women do daily activities to relax and refocus and when they are ready, begin learning professional skills. Six toddlers played in the sunny courtyard one morning while their mothers shared stories as part of a workshop. — Reuters

RAPES OF GIRLS, WOMEN LEAVE SCARS FROM COLOMBIAN WAR

QUIBDO: Like thousands of women, Zoraya suffered sexual abuse by fighters in Colombia's civil war. But that horror is secondary to the memory of what was done to her toddler daughter. At a year and a half old, the child became one of countless women and girls raped and abused during the chaos of the conflict. The country is trying to move on under recent peace accords. But it is still counting the human cost of a war in which the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) says rape has been used as a "weapon" to terrorize civilians.

Child rape

The 32-year-old Afro-Colombian woman, who asked to be identified as Zoraya rather than by her real name, says she blames herself for "not looking back" that day in 2011. She had left her daughter at the child's grandparents' home in the northwestern town of Quibdo, but the girl wandered out, trying to follow her. She was found later in a pool of blood. "They took her dress and her diaper off and put a stick up her anus. They punctured her intestine," Zoraya said. "When they called me and I saw the girl..." she went on, before breaking off into sobs. The child spent a month in intensive care and lives now with "a big scar across nearly her whole abdomen," Zoraya said.

Too little to remember?

Zoraya went to and fro visiting the prosecutors' office until she got sick of it. The child's attackers were never found. Zoraya does not know whether they were members of one of the armed sides in the conflict, or just motiveless sadists swept up in a climate of violence and impunity that decades of war instilled in deprived neighborhoods like hers. "It will mark me forever," she said. Zoraya threw away the dress the girl was wearing that day since she refused to wear it anymore. A psychiatrist told her he thought the child would not suffer after-effects from the trauma, but Zoraya is not sure. "She was very little, but people have mentioned it to her and asked her about it."

Hunger

Like thousands of people displaced by the conflict, Zoraya lives with all her six children in fear of the gangs that still roam Quibdo, extorting money from civilians. "Life is hard here," she says. "Often we have nothing to eat." The father of her children has disappeared and Zoraya does not know if he is alive or dead.

Abuse

Since erupting in the 1960s, the war has pitted various rebel groups against state forces, right-wing paramilitary groups and drug gangs. Zoraya fled her home after one of the armed groups threatened her in 2013. She will not say which one. She was making breakfast when one of her sons heard boots approaching. An armed man in camouflage whom the other men called "boss" ordered her to cook chicken and fish. Then he tried to rape her. "He took hold of me. He wanted to kiss me and I didn't let him. I grabbed him, I hit him in the face, I scratched him," she said. "We fell on the floor and started wrestling" as he groped her. Before he left the man told the family: "If you're still here when I get back this afternoon, I'll burn the house down. You've got 24 hours."

Rape as weapon

The ICRC said in a report on Thursday that most of the victims of sex crimes in the conflict are black and from rural communities. "Sexual violence has been one of the most common weapons used to control civilians," says Lorena Mosquera, an ICRC health worker in Quibdo. "It has been used like a weapon of war." Such atrocities have "very serious" consequences, she says: unwanted pregnancies, abortions, venereal diseases, injuries, broken families and single mothers. The rape victims range in age from one and half to 65 and also include men, Mosquera said. The report says sexual violence "is recurrent and can affect several generations within one family." The Colombian state has recorded nearly 17,100 women as falling victim to sex crimes in the conflict since the 1980s, it says. But Mosquera warned that "there is a very, very high degree of under-reporting" of cases by victims who are too ashamed or frightened to speak.

Justice

A peace deal between the government and the leftist FARC rebel force includes a constitutional reform that will set up special courts to try the perpetrators of sexual and other atrocities in the conflict. Zoraya and her family fled the home where the armed man had attacked her before he could come back and carry out his threat. Terror drove them. As the man had lain on top of her, with her son watching, all Zoraya could think of was what had happened to her infant daughter. — AFP



BREDA: Burka-clad Pegida supporters protest ahead of a campaign stop of firebrand anti-Islam lawmaker Geert Wilders in Breda, Netherlands. — AP

AS FAR RIGHT REAPS VOTES, IMMIGRANTS FACE TOUGHER TIMES IN NETHERLANDS

MUSLIM IMMIGRATION DOMINATES DEBATE

GRONINGEN: Dozens of migrants are sheltering on a former hospital ship in a Dutch canal, beneficiaries of a "Bed, Bath, Bread" program for asylum seekers. But their hopes of settlement are dimming with the anti-immigrant right poised for a surge at the ballot box. Polls suggest the far-right ticket will double its vote in the March 15 election, riding perceptions that many years of Muslim immigration threaten to erode Dutch national identity.

Despite statistics showing there are fewer foreigners in the Netherlands than commonly believed, many voters feel Muslim immigrants are failing to integrate and running down a once-generous health and welfare system. Even if firebrand nationalist leader Geert Wilders does not enter the next ruling coalition given the refusal of "establishment" parties to work with him, he has managed to push the mainstream political agenda to the anti-immigrant right. In the northern coastal town of Groningen, dozens of mainly Muslim men and women - Africans, Arabs and some Iranians - sit at bare tables and chat quietly in the living quarters fashioned out of a ship where hospital patients were once treated.

They are awaiting decisions on appeals of government rejections of their asylum applications, a process that has dragged on for years during which the Netherlands began to crack down hard on economic migrants. In the meantime, they are grateful for the refuge from the harsh North Sea winter. Groningen opened its "Bed, Bath, Bread" facility for 100 asylum seekers in January after the government of conservative Prime Minister Mark Rutte cut off BBB funding, and it plans to expand capacity to 300 people later this year. About 30 other Dutch cities and towns run BBB shelters too. They accommodate thousands of asylum seekers in legal limbo.

"Four years ago I was alone. You know how life is outside, without help, but at this moment I am grateful," said Moussa Sall. He said he fled political violence in Guinea, West Africa and drifted across Europe before arriving in Groningen. Sall and his cohorts were aware and worried about swelling anti-immigrant sentiment represented by Wilders, leader of the anti-Islam Party for Freedom (PVV), but seemed loath to discuss sensitive domestic politics. "I would like to stay here and work as a hairdresser. I have started learning the language. It's not possible to go back to my country for the moment. It's dangerous for me," said Sall.

Populist pressure

That is not the position taken by Rutte's government, which under the populist pressure of Wilders has imposed some of the toughest immigration policies in the European Union since 2012. It has cut off funding for BBB facilities and shortened the period of shelter for failed applicants to 28 days unless they agree to leave and stay in semi-detention prior to deportation. The government has also expanded the list of "safe" countries to which rejected migrants can be legally returned and outlawed the wearing in public of face veils by Muslim women. The nationalist current changing Dutch politics reflects a deep souring of public attitudes towards

immigrants in a country long known for liberalism and multicultural tolerance, rooted in centuries of maritime history.

The welcome showered on hundreds of thousands of Moroccan and Turkish workers a few decades ago has turned to resentment at open-door, pro-EU policies under mainstream parties that may drive 20 percent of voters into the PVV's arms at the polls next week. That could make Wilders' party the biggest in parliament, though it is still unlikely to enter government as all its mainstream rivals have vowed to ostracize the PVV. But diverging views among a handful of contending parties in the election about how many immigrants to accept and where to shelter them could make the formation of the next government a complex, prolonged affair.

Immigration has risen

The percentage of non-Western immigrants in the founding EU member state rose from 7.5 percent of the population in 1996 to 12.1 percent in 2015, according to Statistics Netherlands. In 2015, when a record 1.2 million asylum seekers - often Muslims fleeing Syria's civil war - flowed into the EU, the Netherlands took in 43,000 of them, roughly in line with the 28-nation bloc's average. That year, the Netherlands accepted 2,546 asylum seekers per one million inhabitants, compared with 5,441 in Germany and 1,063 in France, according to Eurostat. The Dutch intake fell by half in 2016 thanks to an EU deal with Turkey that curbed migration via that country to neighboring Europe. Yet the perception of the number of Muslims in the Netherlands greatly outstrips reality.

A 2016 Ipsos poll found most Dutch believed 19 percent of the country's 17 million population is Muslim, rather than the actual 5 percent. Ipsos found a similar gap between perceptions and truth in France. Wilders condemns Moroccans for being over-represented in Dutch crime and welfare statistics. He wants to close the border to non-Western immigrants, shut down hundreds of mosques and take the Netherlands out of the EU. Jesse Klaver, a Greens politician, said Dutch culture was not threatened by immigration but by an intolerant far right. "We are not a racist country. It's not about immigrants or Islam. It's about social, economic problems. People who have to pay too much tax and can't make a living," he said.

Lawsuits

Groningen and other municipalities decided to pay for migrant shelters themselves after talks with Rutte's cabinet about funding the BBB program collapsed. Several lawsuits ensued, including by asylum seekers who won the right to shelter in Amsterdam. Groningen officials said they were honoring a 2014 decision by the European Committee on Social Rights, part of the Council of Europe rights watchdog, that the Dutch must provide shelter and medical care to the homeless as a fundamental human right. Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, accused mainstream parties of not standing up to populists ahead of elections in the Netherlands, Germany and France, but instead adopting their policies for short-term political gain. — Reuters

'WORLD'S HEAVIEST WOMAN' LOSES 100 KG

MUMBAI: Indian doctors said yesterday that an Egyptian who is believed to be the world's heaviest woman had successfully undergone weight-loss surgery after losing over 100 kilograms (220 pounds). Eman Ahmed Abd El Aty, who previously weighed around 500 kilos, had not left her house in Egypt in over two decades until arriving in Mumbai last month for bariatric surgery.

"We are happy to inform all well-wishers that the medical team of Saifee Hospital has successfully performed the surgery on Eman Ahmed," said a statement. "Eman successfully underwent a Laparoscopic Sleeve Gastrectomy on March 7th 2017 at Saifee Hospital. She had an uneventful surgery and anaesthesia course. "She is now on oral fluids and accepting them well. The future course of action for the medical team working on her will be to correct all her associated medical problems, to get her fit enough to fly back to Egypt as soon as possible," it added.

A spokeswoman for Dr Muffazal Lakdawala, who is leading Abd El Aty's treatment, said the 37-year-old Egyptian's weight had been brought under 400 kilograms since she arrived in Mumbai in early February. "Eman has lost over 100 kilograms and has been shedding weight gradually on a daily basis with all the treatment and support," she said. The Egyptian is still believed to be the world's heaviest woman ahead of American Pauline Potter who the Guinness Book of World Records recorded at 293 kilos in July last year. Abd El Aty, who is



MUMBAI: Egyptian patient Eman Ahmed Abd El Aty lies in a hospital bed at The Saifee Hospital in Mumbai, ahead of an operation. — AFP

from the Mediterranean port city of Alexandria, was flown to India's commercial capital in a specially modified Airbus on Saturday 11 February for treatment.

Liquid diet

Her sister had approached Lakdawala, a specialist weight-loss surgeon, in October, saying Abd El Aty needed urgent medical attention. Her family told the doctor that as a child she was diagnosed with elephantiasis, a condition that causes the limbs and other body parts to swell, leaving her almost immobile. Abd El Aty has suffered a stroke and faced a series of other serious ailments owing to her weight including diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension and sleep deprivation. Her request for an Indian visa was initially denied, but she was granted passage after tweeting a plea for help directly to India's foreign minister, who intervened. Abd El Aty had a long wait as no airlines were willing to fly her due to her health complications.

Lakdawala's team put her on a special liquid diet when she arrived in India to get her weight down to a low enough level for them to be able to operate. They say she is now able to sit up and is expected to spend several months being monitored and receiving physiotherapy to exercise her muscles before returning to Egypt. Bariatric surgery is a stomach-shrinking bypass procedure carried out on those wanting to lose excessive weight. It is increasingly common in India, which has a growing problem with obesity, particularly in urban areas. India is a major destination for medical tourists seeking quality services and no waiting lists at a fraction of the cost of western countries. — AFP



KASHMIR: Kashmiri villagers mourn 15-year-old Amir Nazir during his funeral in the village of Kakapora in Pulwama District, some 30kms south of Srinagar yesterday. — AFP

15-YEAR-OLD BOY, TWO REBELS KILLED IN KASHMIR GUNBATTLE

SRINAGAR: A 15-year-old boy was killed yesterday during an anti-India protest in disputed Kashmir triggered by a gunbattle in which two suspected rebels died, police and villagers said. Senior police officer SP Vaid said the gunbattle began yesterday after troops cordoned off southern Padgampora village on a tip that militants were hiding in a house. As the fighting raged, villagers tried to march to the area and attacked government forces with rocks to help the militants escape, Vaid said.

Villagers said the troops fired live ammunition, tear gas and shotgun pellets at the protesters, killing a 15-year-old boy and wounding three others, one critically. Vaid said the boy was killed by a stray bullet as the villagers ignored repeated calls by the authorities to stay away from the site of the gunbattle. Another police official, speaking on customary condition of anonymity, said one of the two militants was killed in an initial exchange of gunfire.—AP

RELATIVES SEEK THE TRUTH ABOUT IRISH BABIES 'DISCARDED LIKE LITTER' MASS BABY GRAVE FOUND AT FORMER CATHOLIC INSTITUTION

TUAM: Peter Mulryan's little sister may lie buried among the bones of babies and toddlers found in the sewers of what was once a home for unmarried mothers in the Irish town of Tuam, but he wants to know for sure. The announcement last week by an official inquiry that it had found "significant quantities" of remains at the site has horrified Ireland, reviving anguish over how women and children were once treated at state-backed Catholic institutions.

The number of bodies is unknown, but a trail of paper evidence suggests there could be close to 800. For Mulryan, who was born to an unmarried mother in 1944 and spent the first four years of his life at the Tuam home before being fostered, the grim discovery brings hope that he may find out what happened to Marian, the younger sister he never knew. "What I am looking for now is: where is she?" Mulryan told Reuters in an interview at a hotel near his home in Ballinasloe, a short drive away from Tuam. Both are small towns in rural County Galway in the west of Ireland. "I would like to see her remains removed out of there and we'll give her a dignified funeral," said the soft-spoken father of seven and grandfather of eight. The infant mortality rate at Church-run institutions was significantly higher than in wider Irish society, and it is likely that other unmarked mass graves will be discovered. Death certificates mostly blame infections like measles, gastroenteritis, bronchitis, tuberculosis, meningitis and pneumonia, but nobody has established why children were so much more likely to die than in the general population.

Marian was baptized, and her death certificate states she died from convulsions at the age of nine months. She was one of 796 babies and children recorded to have died at the Tuam home, and whose burial place is unknown. "It hangs over me, not knowing what happened to her," said Mulryan, who only learnt of Marian's existence a few years ago. In the past, Ireland's strict Catholic morality made it deeply shameful to become pregnant before marriage, and women would be rejected by their families and society as sinful.

Mulryan's mother Delia was one of an estimated 35,000 Irish women who passed through Catholic mother-and-baby homes in the 20th century to have their babies in secrecy. The power of the Church and the stigma associated with unmarried mothers were so overwhelming that for decades the harsh treatment of these women and their children were taboo subjects, and many were forgotten. Run by nuns from the Bon Secours order, the Tuam home operated from 1925 to 1961 and was demolished in the 1970s. Now, an estate of low-rise, modest homes stands on the site, with a large playground tucked away behind some back yards.

'No respect at all'

It is beneath a patch of grass near the playground that the remains, ranging from 35-week-old fetuses to three-year-old toddlers, were found in test excavations. Work on the burial site has been

halted for now, and it has been fenced off. Visitors have placed a few bunches of fresh flowers and a teddy bear outside the gate. The Bon Secours nuns have made no comment about why babies' corpses were interred in a sewer. They have said they transferred the home's records to the local authority when the home closed in 1961.

It was only through the dogged efforts of amateur local historian Catherine Corless, who made it her mission to investigate the history of the home in her own free time, that the existence of the mass grave was exposed. "I just felt I had to do it for them. The drive came to get justice for them," said Corless. "I felt they were just discarded as litter, just because they were so-called illegitimate." As a result of Corless's research, a commission of inquiry into 18 mother-and-baby homes across Ireland, including Tuam, was set up in 2014. "If something happened in Tuam, it probably happened in other mother-and-baby homes around the country," said Archbishop of Dublin Diarmuid Martin in 2014. Mothers would typically spend about a year at homes like the one in Tuam before being parted from their babies and sent away. Many left Ireland and started new lives elsewhere. Others, like Delia Mulryan, were imprisoned in the notorious Magdalene laundries where "fallen women" were forced into unpaid labor. As for the children, some were fostered, some adopted and some remained in the mother-and-baby homes until they could be sent to live at state-funded, church-run orphanages known as Industrial Schools, where they would be taught to work.

Peter Mulryan was among many who experienced ill treatment and neglect by foster families who used them as farm laborers. "We were nobody. We received no respect at all," said Mulryan, who for much of his life was so acutely aware of his low status that he kept his head bowed and never spoke of his origins. As an adult, Mulryan traced his mother and visited her several times in the Magdalene laundry where she spent the rest of her life. When his first daughter was born, he took her to his mother, who held the baby in her arms. But she never revealed that she had also had a baby girl of her own.

'Chamber of horrors'

The Church's prestige and authority have been greatly diminished over the past two decades by a series of scandals over paedophile priests, abuse at Magdalene laundries, forced adoptions of illegitimate babies and other painful issues. "We had to bow to priests and bishops, but we never got respect back. So few have lifted the phone and apologised to me. It's the least they might do. Speak from the heart, from the altar, about what was done to the likes of us," said Mulryan. Since the finding of the baby remains at Tuam was announced, the scandal has dominated the headlines in Irish media and prompted an outpouring of emotion. On Monday night, state television broadcast the names of all 796 of the lost children, which scrolled down the screen to the sound of mournful music.—Reuters

MAGIC IN THE AIR: MYANMAR WIZARDRY FLOURISHES

THANLYIN: From spells to win back an errant lover to help communing with the spirits, Myanmar's mediums, soothsayers and wizards dabbling in the occult, are in high demand. Most people here believe in a brand of Buddhism laced with animism and magic, but since the end of military rule such practices have burst into the open. Win Win Aye is a part-time medium, who claims she has cured dozens of people of illnesses and curses-with the assistance of benevolent Buddhist spirits. "I know when they have possessed me," the 42-year-old tells AFP at her house in Thalyin, near Yangon, shortly after a session, which she conducts for free as a hobby. "When I want to say something my mouth can't form the words, the person who possesses me says what he or she wants," she explains.

During the British colonial era and the half-century of military rule that followed many people used 'weikza'-semi-divine Buddhist wizard-saints-to fight

their oppressors. Most of these sects were disbanded or pushed underground by the generals who seized power in 1962, deeply superstitious themselves they lived in fear of a supernatural strike back. General Ne Win, who was prime minister in the 1950s and 1960s, was said to be particularly obsessed with the occult: he reportedly bathed in dolphins' blood believing it would help him regain his youth.

In the 1980s he almost ruined Myanmar's economy by changing bank notes to denominations of his lucky number-nine. But since the 2011 handover of power by the junta, magic is back in the open for ordinary people. Sorcery courses are popping up across the country, and many so-called experts are sharing their knowledge of witchcraft in journals and online. "Ever since the Burmese censor board was dissolved (in 2012) there has been an explosion in these kinds of magical manuals," says Thomas Patton, an expert on

Southeast Asian magical practices at Hong Kong's City University. "I would argue they are one of, if not the most, widely-read genres in Myanmar," he adds.

Masters of magic

In an unassuming apartment in northwest Yangon, Linn Nhyo Taryar wraps a straw figurine with black tape and places it in the centre of a circle adorned with magical symbols. The skinny 21-year-old closes his eyes and mutters incantations to 'activate' the doll in readiness for his first class as a magic teacher. The soft-spoken sorcerer started studying magic aged five, beginning by reading tarot cards then gradually building up an online following on Facebook. "Magic is the art of receiving the power of nature. Without the power of nature, we can't do anything," he explains. "In magic, it depends if you want to do good things or bad things: if you do a bad thing, it will be black magic." — AFP

STUCK BETWEEN TRUMP, GANG MIGRANTS STOP

MEXICO CITY: When a gang threatened to kill Rocio, her husband and their two small children, they fled their native Honduras, hoping for asylum in the United States. Now they are stuck in Mexico, too scared to risk being deported from the United States under President Donald Trump's crack-down on migrants. The family fled to Mexico last June and was anxious to move on, fearing the Honduran gang would track them down.

"We changed our minds because of that president, the way he is deporting people," she said of Trump, who has vowed stepped up deportation procedures against undocumented immigrants. Now the 25-year-old woman and her family live in a charity shelter in Mexico. She asked to be identified just as Rocio, without her last name, for fear of reprisals. She has applied three times for refugee status, which would protect her from deportation and allow her access to health care and education. But the courts have so far denied it to her family for lack of evidence.

Trump effect

Deadly gang violence in Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala is driving hundreds of thousands of desperate migrants to flee north. Officials say nearly 9,000 people applied for refugee status in Mexico last year and the figure may double this year. "The radicalization of certain measures by the new US government makes us expect the number of applications will increase," Mexico's deputy migration minister Humberto Roque Villanueva said. Carlos, a 43-year-old farmer from El Salvador, also risks deportation after failing to get refugee status. He lives in an overcrowded shelter in Mexico City where airplanes flying nearby make a deafening noise. "We would all prefer to go to the United States, but now everyone is staying here" in Mexico, says Carlos, 43.

"Trump says he is not going to deport everyone, just the bad people, but that's not certain. If they grab one person in a place, they'll grab everyone there." Carlos would much rather be back home on his peaceful farm growing sesame and corn, but it is too dangerous. After members of one gang ordered him to feed them, he became a reluctant enemy of their rivals, the notoriously violent Salvatrucha gang. "I was greatly afraid all the time," he said. "Mexico may be dangerous, but at least here you can go out for a walk and make friends."

Refugee applications increasing

Mexico's President Enrique Pena Nieto last year promised to speed up the refugee applications process. But immigration authorities still only have about 50 staffers assigned to handling all the cases. Of those, 29 are paid by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Mexican officials "don't give residency papers to people who really need them; but they do give them to people who chose to leave home and come here," Rocio complained, clenching her fists. Authorities say more than 400,000 people cross into Mexico via its southern border each year. "Applications keep increasing," says senior UNHCR official Jose Francisco Sieber. "Innovative solutions are needed to allow applications to be processed fairly." — AFP



KUALA LUMPUR: Cameraman films outside the gate of North Korean Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday. — AP

TWO MALAYSIANS LEAVE N KOREA; NINE STILL STRANDED AMID TALKS

ANGERED BY INVESTIGATION, NORTH KOREA IMPOSED TRAVEL BAN

KUALA LUMPUR: North Korea guaranteed the safety of Malaysians banned from leaving the country, Malaysia's prime minister said yesterday, as two Malaysian UN employees left the isolated state in a possible sign that diplomatic tensions had begun to settle. North Korea had barred Malaysians from leaving the country on Tuesday, sparking tit-for-tat action by Malaysia as relations soured over its investigation into the murder last month of Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

After earlier this week accusing North Korea of assassinating Kim Jong Nam with a banned chemical weapon and of treating Malaysians like hostages, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak has taken a softer line to get his citizens out of the secretive, nuclear-armed state. "Diplomatic relations between Malaysia and North Korea will not be severed, as we need to continue communicating with them to find a solution," Najib said in a statement on his blog. But, he added that his government "will not relent from a firm approach" in dealings with North Korea.

The departure of two Malaysians working for the UN's World Food Program (WFP) meant nine still remained at the embassy in Pyongyang. They included three diplomats and six family members. "The government of North Korea has given a guarantee of safety," Najib said in a message on social network Twitter. "They are free to do their daily activities, but they cannot leave the country." Najib confirmed on Twitter that the two WFP staffers, Stella Lim and Nyanaprakash Muniandy, had left

North Korea and reached Beijing. It was unclear why the pair, who according to a Malaysian government official held UN passports, had been allowed to go.

Malaysian sources familiar with the matter said negotiations were underway between the two countries to resolve their issues, including the removal of the ban on Malaysians leaving North Korea, but were not expected to end soon. The United Nations has called for calm between Malaysia and North Korea and urged them to settle their differences through "established diplomatic practice." Najib said any negotiations with Pyongyang would be conducted behind closed doors. "I can only disclose that the government is in the process of establishing the reasons and motives behind the actions of North Korea," he said.

Negotiations begin

South Korean intelligence officers say Kim Jong Un had issued standing orders for the elimination of his elder half-brother who was known to have criticized his family's regime. Malaysian police have identified eight North Koreans in connection with the case. They say are three still in Kuala Lumpur, hiding at the North Korean embassy. Malaysia is one of the few countries that has for decades maintained ties with the isolated state. But as relations plunged in the wake of the murder, Malaysia recalled its envoy from Pyongyang and expelled the North Korean ambassador. — Reuters

INDONESIAN POLITICIANS IMPLICATED IN MAJOR GRAFT CASE

JAKARTA: Indonesian politicians, including the justice minister and ex-interior minister, and officials were implicated yesterday in a major corruption scandal estimated to have sucked about \$170 million out of government coffers. A special anti-corruption court began hearing a case that alleges huge amounts of money were siphoned off funds earmarked for a government project to issue new ID cards to the country's 255 million inhabitants. Even by the standards of graft-riddled Indonesia, one of the world's most corrupt countries, the seriousness of the allegations has caused widespread shock.

One current interior ministry official and one former official from the same department were the first to go on trial yesterday at the Jakarta court over the controversy that allegedly took place from 2009 to 2015. Parliament had agreed to allocate more than five trillion rupiah (\$370 million) for the project but about half was allegedly embezzled and handed out to politicians and interior ministry officials, causing the state an estimated loss of \$170 million, the court heard.

An indictment released as the case got under way named high-profile figures accused of receiving kickbacks,

including Justice Minister Yasonna Laoly, former interior minister Gamawan Fauzi, parliamentary speaker Setya Novanto and other prominent lawmakers. Several politicians named in the indictment have denied the allegations. "This is horrendous because the allegations highlight corruption in procurement and the budgeting process in parliament," said Tama Langkun of watchdog Indonesian Corruption Watch. Indonesia was ranked 90th out of 176 countries and territories in NGO Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index last year. A number one ranking represents the least corrupt. — AFP

PAKISTAN THREATENS TO BLOCK SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS OVER 'BLASPHEMY'

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani court has ordered the government to open an investigation into online "blasphemy", threatening to ban social media networks if they failed to censor content deemed insulting to Islam, lawyers said yesterday. The issue came to the fore in January when five secular activists known for their outspoken views against religious extremism and the powerful military were disappeared, presumed abducted by state agencies according to opposition parties and international rights groups. Four of them were later returned to their families weeks later, but not before they were tarnished by a virulent campaign to paint them enemies of Islam deserving execution.

Judge Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui of the Islamabad High Court asked the government to form an investigative committee to report back next Monday over the issue, saying he could order social media sites to be blocked if offending content remained online. "The judge ordered the government to make a Joint Investigation Team (JIT) with Muslim officials only to look into the blasphemy issue," said advocate Tariq Asad, who represents the hard-line Red Mosque which brought the case to court.

Rights groups say the label of blasphemer is liberally applied by religious conservatives in order to silence criticism of extremism. Even unproven allegations can be fatal. At least 65 people including lawyers, judges and activists have been murdered by vigilantes over blasphemy allegations since 1990, according to recent think tank report. Pakistan previously banned Facebook for hosting allegedly blasphemous content for two weeks in 2010 while YouTube was unavailable from 2012 to 2016 over an amateur film about the Prophet Muhammad that led to global riots. —AFP

SOUTH KOREA STRUGGLES TO RETALIATE IN MISSILE SPAT

FIRMS IN CHINA REPORT DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

SEOUL: South Korean firms have had a torrid time in China since Seoul dismissed Chinese objections and approved a new missile defense system, but for all the discriminatory tactics Korean firms say they are victims of, there is little Seoul can do to retaliate. South Korea sold \$124 billion worth of goods and services to its western neighbor last year, about five times the amount exported to its eastern neighbor, Japan, and double that shipped to its second-biggest market, the United States. But the amount could drop this year after China's state media orchestrated a boycott on Korean produce in protest at a missile system designed to thwart any North Korean assault, but whose radar China says is capable of penetrating its territory.

Korea's Lotte Group has suffered cyber attacks and said some of its stores in China have been fined or closed by authorities, while some shops have been hit by anti-Korean demonstrations. Korean airlines have been refused permission to increase China-Korea flights, cosmetics firms have reported increased scrutiny at customs, and Chinese travel agents have been ordered to stop tours to South Korea. China's foreign ministry said law-abiding foreign firms were welcome and would be protected. But South Korea's ruling party said the government will actively consider complaining about "unfair retaliation" to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

The WTO previously chastised China for restricting exports of rare earth minerals during a 2010 row with Japan over disputed islands, and then curbing global shipments. But the organization would find it far more difficult to penalize more subtle forms of perceived retaliation, current and former South Korean government officials told Reuters. "We need some official proof," Chang Dohwan, a director at South Korea's finance ministry, told Reuters. "Taking diplomatic action without confirming (that such tactics stemmed from central government) could just spread anger."

Weapons

Conditions for South Korean firms in China have deteriorated since Seoul agreed in July to deploy the US-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. The situation became acute last week after a Lotte Group company decided to supply land for the system. Any means of fighting back could lie in South Korea's biggest shipments to China - semiconductors and displays, which make up over one-third of total exports to the mainland.

But any legal means of Korea risking one of its most profitable sectors by restricting such exports is unrealistic, said analyst Piao Ren-Jin at NH Investment & Securities. "Seoul can continue to express its concern, and take this to the WTO, but that's about it at the state-level," Piao said. In a worst case scenario, the spat could reduce the size of South Korea's economy by as much as 0.25 percent, she said. Instead, the government has advised firms to devise countermeasures such as diversifying markets.

One company considering such a move is Le Belle Cosmetics, whose sales are "grinding to a halt" at a duty free shop in central Seoul as Chinese tourist numbers fall, said the firm's chief executive, Cathy Lim. "We cannot just look at China," Lim said, highlighting emerging markets such as Vietnam as options for expansion. "But at the same time, no market can replace China." Lee Hang-Koo, a senior research fellow at state-funded Korea Institute for Industrial Economics & Trade, said the government suggesting companies diversify markets to minimize any impact from difficulties in China was "absurd and irresponsible".

"China is just too big," he said, adding a WTO complaint was not feasible considering lack of evidence and could take years. "It's better to just talk through diplomatic channels." Any complaint can only worsen relations with South Korea's biggest customer, which bought around a quarter of total exports last year from around 10 percent at the turn of the century, showed data from the Korea International Trade Association. Over the same period, China's exports to South Korea have moved little from about 4.5 percent, according to think tank Hyundai Research Institute.

Designer retaliation

At present, there is little evidence of WTO rule-breaking. Chinese authorities closed stores belonging to Lotte Group and others due to fire-safety concerns, and cosmetics firms have said Chinese market access has been tightened by stricter customs and sanitary approval procedures. "China, which has been lax about imposing rules, are just applying those rules," said former South Korean foreign ministry official Choi Won-Mog. However, Korean authorities have said Chinese tour operators have been given official "verbal" orders to halt Korean tours.

"China has carefully designed retaliation against South Korea so that it does not violate international laws," having learnt its lesson from the rare earths restrictions during the Japan dispute, said Choi, a professor at Ewha Law School. One of the most notable victims of the Japan dispute was the automobile industry, with widespread vandalism of Japanese cars. South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co is monitoring the situation, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters. "We have not seen any major impact so far, but we are worried about how the situation will unfold," the person said. "There is not much that individual companies can do." — Reuters



SHENYANG: A Chinese visitor touches a wax figure of US President Donald Trump in Shenyang, northeastern China's Liaoning province. China warned on March 8 that North Korea and the United States were like two trains racing towards a 'head-on collision,' calling on both sides to apply the brakes and avert a security crisis. — AFP

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Lifestyle

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Kong: Skull Island revives iconic ape

Magic in the air: Myanmar wizardry flourishes

From spells to win back an errant lover to help communing with the spirits, Myanmar's mediums, soothsayers and wizards dabbling in the occult, are in high demand. Most people here believe in a brand of Buddhism laced with animism and magic, but since the end of military rule such practices have burst into the open. Win Win Aye is a part-time medium, who claims she has cured dozens of people of illnesses and curses-with the assistance of benevolent Buddhist spirits.

"I know when they have possessed me," the 42-year-old tells AFP at her house in Thalyin, near Yangon, shortly after a session, which she conducts for free as a hobby. "When I want to say something my mouth can't form the words, the person who possesses me says what he or she wants," she explains. During the British colonial



This photo taken on January 15, 2017 shows Zaw Min, a master from the popular sect of Shwe Yin Kyaw, talking during an interview at his house.

era and the half-century of military rule that followed many people used 'weikza'-semi-divine Buddhist wizard-saints-to fight their oppressors.

Most of these sects were disbanded or pushed underground by the generals who seized power in 1962, deeply superstitious themselves they lived in fear of a supernatural strike back. General Ne Win, who was prime minister in the 1950s and 1960s, was said to be particularly obsessed with the occult: he reportedly bathed in dolphins' blood believing it would help him regain his youth. In the 1980s he almost ruined Myanmar's economy by changing bank notes to denominations of his lucky number-nine. But since the 2011 handover of power by the junta, magic is back in the open for ordinary people. Sorcery courses are popping up across the country, and many so-called experts are sharing their knowledge of witchcraft in journals and online.

"Ever since the Burmese censor board was dissolved (in 2012) there has been an explosion in these kinds of magical manuals," says Thomas Patton, an expert on Southeast Asian magical practices at Hong Kong's City University. "I would argue they are one of, if not the most, widely-read genres in Myanmar," he adds.

Masters of magic

In an unassuming apartment in northwest Yangon, Linn Nhyo Taryar wraps a straw figurine with black tape and places it in the centre of a circle adorned with magical symbols. The skinny 21-year-old closes his eyes and mutters incantations to 'activate' the doll in readiness for his first class as a magic teacher. The soft-spoken sorcerer started studying magic aged five, beginning by reading tarot cards then gradually building up an online following on Facebook.

"Magic is the art of receiving the power of nature. Without the power of nature, we can't do



This photo taken on January 8, 2017 shows Linn Nhyo Taryar (R), 21, who was arrested after scared social media users told police he was teaching people how to use black magic, at his magic training class in Yangon. — AFP photos



This photo taken on February 6, 2017 shows part-time Win Win Aye paying respect to ancient spirits at her house.

anything," he explains. "In magic, it depends if you want to do good things or bad things: if you do a bad thing, it will be black magic. If you do a good thing, then it will be white magic." Minutes later more than a dozen students start crowding into the room, eager to learn arts they hope will safeguard their loved ones-and their wallets.

Linn Nhyo Taryar shows them how to create voodoo dolls, draw magical charts and cast spells using rituals involving bananas and incense. "I want to be able to help and protect my family with magic if something (bad) happens to us," says student Paing Soe Naung, 25. May Sandar Kyi, a 49-year-old merchant, adds: "I am very interested in it because others treat me unfairly, like when they don't give me back (money) they take from me."

Dark arts

But while magical practices are increasingly tolerated in Myanmar, some still fear the power

of the supernatural. A week after AFP attended the lesson, Linn Nhyo Taryar was arrested after scared social media users told police he was teaching people how to use black magic. Belief in sorcery can also have tragic consequences.

In October, a self-proclaimed exorcist beat two toddlers and an eight-month-old baby to death in a village outside Yangon after telling their families they were possessed.

Appearing at court the following month the alleged killer, Tun Naing, told reporters he had been taken over by a "dark spirit" at the time. Zaw Min, a master from the popular sect of Shwe Yin Kyaw, says only people of "good virtue" should carry out exorcisms.



"We have no right to attack others," the 50-year-old tells AFP. "If we break this rule, we will be in trouble." Still, Patton says many people believe magic was behind the biggest change in Myanmar for a generation: the end of military rule and the election of Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party in 2015. "People always looked to these magical saints or wizards or sorcerers to help them bring peace and democracy," he says. "Now that has happened a lot of these people believe that 'wow, this magic really does work.'" — AFP



This photo taken on February 6, 2017 shows part-time medium Win Win Aye being possessed in her house on the outskirts of Yangon.



Return of the King:

'Skull Island' revives iconic ape

Eight decades since furry wrecking machine King Kong first stomped into theaters, the giant ape with a predilection for bottle-blonde damsels in distress makes his cinematic comeback this weekend. "Kong: Skull Island" is expected to be a huge worldwide hit, leveraging a global fan base built up through a series of sequels, reboots and spin-offs that has turned the character into a cinematic icon.

"Going back to the classic 1933 'King Kong' starring Fay Wray, this beauty and the beast tale has held a particular fascination for audiences and has continued to inspire filmmakers over the decades," Paul Dergarabedian, of media analytics firm comScore, told AFP. "Though superheroes seem to rule the earth, monster movies will always have a place in the hearts of audiences, and this latest version should benefit from that interest." Directed by Jordan Vogt-Roberts, a newcomer to big studio properties, the latest Kong monster mash features a stratospherically famous cast led by Samuel L Jackson, Tom Hiddleston, Brie Larson and a svelte John Goodman. Set in 1973, with US involvement in the Vietnam War ending, explorer Bill Randa (Goodman) persuades a senator to let him gather a team to explore the seismology of a mysterious Pacific island isolated by storms.



Murderous havoc

"Jurassic World" meets "Apocalypse Now" as Randa's military escort—a motley band of brothers led by the brooding Lt Colonel Preston Packard (Jackson) — give the big guy and an array of other scary monsters plenty to chew on. Along for the ride is Captain James Conrad, an SAS tracker turned mercenary (Hiddleston), and plucky anti-war photojournalist Mason Weaver-Brie Larson in her first role since her Oscar-win-

ning performance in "Room." The comic relief is provided by John C. Reilly's deliciously impish portrayal of half-crazed World War II pilot Hank Marlow, who has been marooned on the island for 29 years. Kong, meanwhile, shares his home with vicious lizard-like creatures that have been skulking in a primordial hollow beneath the island, occasionally surfacing to wreak murderous havoc among a small community of human natives.

There's a spider the size of a multi-story parking garage, a flock of birds with beaks shaped like chainsaws, gargantuan water buffalo and a giant squid the size of, well, a giant squid. The original "King Kong" received universal acclaim and to this day is ranked by movie website Rotten Tomatoes as one of the best reviewed horror movies of all time.

"Son of Kong" was rushed out nine months later and panned, while two commercially successful remakes were released to mixed reviews—a 1976 version starring Jeff Bridges and Jessica Lange and a 2005 CGI-fest by "Lord of the Rings" director Peter Jackson.

'Pure cinematic cash'

Then there were the spin-offs—the Japanese-American cult hit "King Kong vs. Godzilla" (1962), the less popular "King Kong Escapes" (1967) and critical and box office flop "King Kong Lives" (1986). "Although monster movies haven't completely made a definitive comeback yet, Kong's appeal this time around seems to be driven by fan interest in a more action-driven, light-hearted adventure film than past iterations," said Shawn Robbins, a

senior analyst at BoxOffice.com. Filmed in Hawaii, Vietnam and Australia's Gold Coast, "Skull Island" casts Kong as a 100-foot (30-meter) biped who strides his territory like a colossal human, in contrast with the more realistic but less fun knuckle-walking, 25-foot monster of the 2005 movie.

The movie originally was supposed to be a Universal feature but in 2015 the studio announced it was letting the Legendary Pictures production move to Warner Bros. as the two companies were already planning "Godzilla vs. Kong" for release in 2020.

Jeff Bock, a senior box office analyst for Exhibitor Relations, said "Skull Island" could expect to gross upwards of \$50 million in its opening weekend, enough perhaps to topple hit "X-Men" spin-off "Logan," Hugh Jackman's final movie as the X-Men mutant Wolverine. "The iconic ape is pure cinematic cash for Warner Bros., which is expecting a colossal hit worldwide along the lines of \$500 million-plus," said Bock. "Why else would you dump \$190 million into a film, combined with an advertising campaign that rivals even the biggest summer blockbuster?" — AFP

Celebs use social media to support International Women's Day

Celebrities are using social media to express their support for Wednesday's International Women's Day. A sampling:

- "Dreaming of a World Where Women have Equal Rights" - Madonna on Instagram, with an outtake from her recent Vogue Germany shoot.
- "Whatever women do they must do twice as well as men to be thought half as good. Luckily, this is not difficult" #internationalwomensday" - Adele on Twitter.
- "We must support the empowerment of women & girls today & forever. Let us bring in a future that holds our shared opportunities. #IWD2017" - Forest Whitaker, on Twitter.
- "I will raise my children to be beautiful human beings and powerful men who understand how magnificent women are. I believe that all women, all over the world, are beautiful, whole and powerful. They should be honored like goddesses, not just on International Women's Day, but every day. We must continue to lift each other up, believe in ourselves and not hold back from this truth. #InternationalWomensDay" - Keys, on Instagram, with a photo of herself and her son.
- "#internationalwomensday should be everyday. blessings to all the Queens" - Swizz Beatz on Instagram, with a photo of wife Alicia Keys.
- "Happy Women's Day to all the amazing ladies around the world #womensday" - David Beckham on Instagram, with a photo of his wife and daughter.
- "Love and respect to all women around the world today and EVERYDAY. #InternationalWomensDay" - Josh Duhamel on Twitter.
- "It's #internationalwomensday and this lady took a break last night to shine all on her own. Wear red. Let's not get to



Adele

- work!" - Jane Lynch on Twitter, with a picture of the Statue of Liberty's torch.
- "Feminists have always been emboldened by the acts of immigrant women. Following their lead will never steer us wrong." - Lena Dunham, in an essay on LinkedIn.
- "Happy #InternationalWomensDay or, as it's often called on here, #WhyIsn'tThereAnInternationalMensDay (There is: November 19th)" - JK Rowling on Twitter.

- "It's time to be bold. If you can't be bold for yourself, be bold for others: run for office, volunteer, get active. #BeBoldForChange #IWD" - Chelsea Handler on Instagram.
- "Have a great day. (But just the one remember) #InternationalWomensDay" - Michael Sheen on Twitter.
- "Equity, justice and human rights for women and all gender-oppressed people! #InternationalWomensDay #ADayWithoutAWoman" - Kate Walsh on Twitter.
- "At the end of the day, you may not make the rules - yet - but you can create the reality you want. Embrace your differences, allow yourself the ability to grow, see through the challenges and be present in each aspect of your life. I will be BOLD and challenge the status quo." - Jessica Alba, in an essay on LinkedIn.
- "Happy #InternationalWomensDay to the wondrous, fairer, gentler & generally vastly superior sex." - Piers Morgan on Twitter.
- "Wathint' abafazi wathint' imbokodo. #InternationalWomensDay" - Trevor Noah, posting a South African saying that means "You strike the women, you strike the rock," on Twitter.
- "Solidarity. The Statue Of Liberty is dark today. #ADayWithoutWomen #InternationalWomensDay However you choose to express your solidarity - striking, wearing red, making phone calls to your reps, only spending money at women-owned businesses (one of or all of these things) - thank you." - Sophia Bush on Instagram.
- "I am strong, I am invincible, I am woman Happy #InternationalWomensDay to all you female badasses!" - Katie Couric on Twitter. — AP



Director Francis Ford Coppola

TRIBECA TO CLOSE WITH 'GODFATHER' REUNION

The 16th Tribeca Film Festival will close with a "Godfather" cast reunion and a back-to-back screening of parts one and two of Francis Ford Coppola's classic saga. Tribeca announced Wednesday that the 45th anniversary screenings will be followed by a conversation with Coppola, Al Pacino, Diane Keaton, Robert Duvall, James Caan and Talia Shire. Robert De Niro, co-founder of the festival, naturally, will also join the April 29 event, to be held at Radio City Music Hall.

The New York festival also plans several other anniversary celebrations. A 25th anniversary of "Reservoir Dogs" will be followed by a chat with Quentin Tarantino and the cast. A sing-along will be held for the 25th anniversary of Disney's "Aladdin." And Michael Moore will be at the festival for the 15th anniversary of his "Bowling for Columbine." The festival on Wednesday also added the premiere of "The Circle," a Dave Eggers adaptation starring Tom Hanks and Emma Watson, and directed by James Ponsoldt ("The End of the Tour"). Also debuting at Tribeca will be the Sean "Diddy" Combs documentary "Can't Stop, Won't Stop: The Bad Boy Story" and the ESPN documentary about the sports radio icons "Mike and the Mad Dog." The Tribeca Film Festival will take place April 19-30. — AP

JOE MANGANIELLO CALLS MEDIA 'DRAMA QUEENS' OVER 'THE BATMAN'

Joe Manganiello is asking for the media to dial down the drama surrounding the upcoming stand-alone Batman film. Manganiello is signed on to play the villain Deathstroke opposite Ben Affleck's caped crusader in "The Batman." Affleck is writing the screenplay and was also set to direct the Warner Bros. project, but pulled back from those plans in late January. "Cloverfield" director Matt Reeves is now helming the film.

Manganiello tells Robert Irvine Magazine those in the media who suggest the project is in trouble or the script needs revision "are drama queens." He says "everyone on the cast and crew wants to make this the best movie possible." Manganiello, who is married to Sofia Vergara, says shooting begins "soon," but not before the creative process runs its course. — AP



Joe Manganiello arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of "Kong: Skull Island" at the Dolby Theatre. — AP

For US composer, understanding Trump through optics

To Mohammed Fairouz, a leading US composer whose work seeks the universal in the present day, policy experts have it wrong when it comes to President Donald Trump. The artist, who has brought both poetry and politics alive through his music, finds it telling that Trump is so visibly enraged by Alec Baldwin, the actor who impersonates him on the comedy show Saturday Night Live. "I'm a composer; Alec is an actor. We know Donald Trump much better than the other side of me," said Fairouz, a frequent author of political essays. "The policy wonks don't really understand Donald Trump. People who come out of the entertainment industry do," Fairouz told AFP over an evening of contemplative conversation at his home studio in New York.

With his background in reality television, Trump, to Fairouz, is "all about optics"—even when the new president takes actions that are highly controversial. "If it can be engineered so a woman who just got court protection for domestic abuse is then deported, it looks awful—but he knows his base," Fairouz, who speaks with precision but passion, said of a recent case against an undocumented immigrant.

Fairouz's latest work premieres this month at the Dutch National Opera— "The New Prince," a futuristic reimagining of Machiavelli and his "end justifies the means" philosophy. The opera, with a libretto by Washington Post journalist David Ignatius, casts a reborn Machiavelli in a world of contemporary figures including apostle of realpolitik Henry Kissinger.

Trump as opera?

Asked if Trump could be the subject of a future opera, Fairouz responded without hesitation: No. Opera is "a way to reach beyond the muddled present to touch things that are timeless and eternal, and that is different from the ephemera of daily op-ed pieces and breaking news," Fairouz said. "I think that Donald Trump lives in that ephemera. When Donald Trump dies and is no longer able to generate breaking news stories, his power fails."

Fairouz sees as misplaced the depictions by some on the left who see Trump as Hitler. Better comparisons, Fairouz said, may include more insular-minded masters of image such as Argentina's Eva Peron and Pakistani dictator Zia-ul-Haq. Yet Zia knew not to ruffle the feathers of the powerful military and intelligence services from which he emerged, said Fairouz, whose upcoming projects include an opera on the lives and violent deaths of Pakistan's Bhuttos.

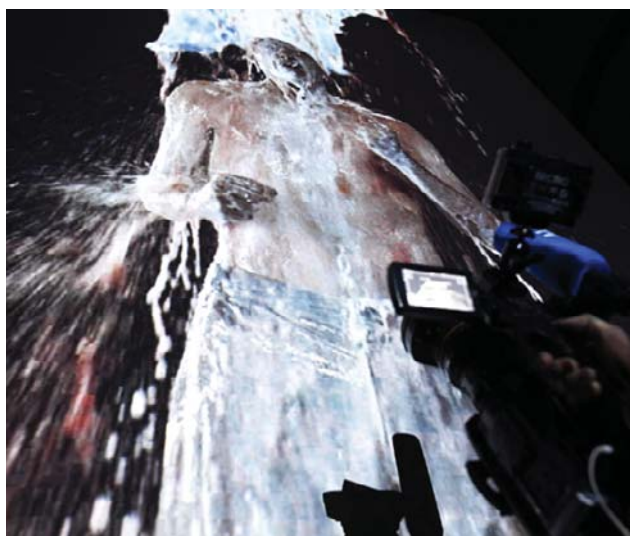
"Zia was able to pull off a certain level of looking like a fool, clinging onto power by being self-effacing—'I am your humble servant.' I don't think Trump can do that," Fairouz said. Fairouz saw the US national security establishment—"ossified and in many ways dysfunctional"—as a key factor in restraining Trump.

Symptom, not disease

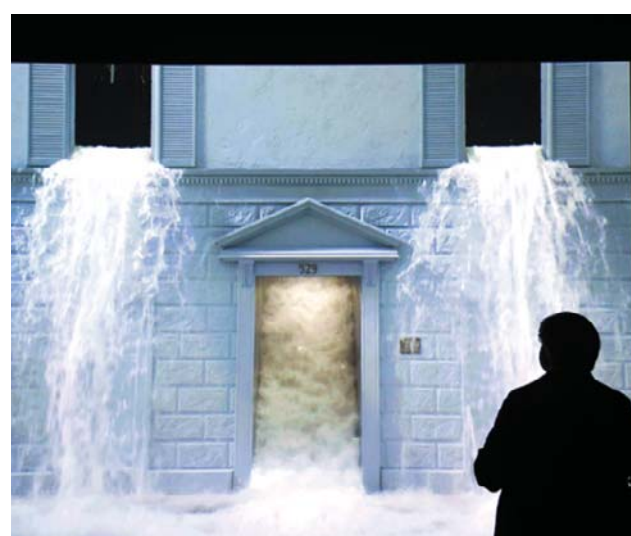
Fairouz, a supporter of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, has stayed on the frontline. An Arab-American, Fairouz helped translate for travelers held up by Trump's initial ban on entry of people from seven Muslim-majority countries. He also composed a song for a recent night of activist solidarity at Lincoln Center. Fairouz sees Trump, who enhanced his political career with false claims that then-president Barack Obama was not born in the United States, as part of a deeper strain of anti-intellectualism on the US right.—AFP



This file photo taken on January 23, 2015 shows composer Mohammed Fairouz speaking during an interview at a recording studio in New York. — AFP



A journalist watches a video by US artist Bill Viola during a press preview of the exhibition "Bill Viola' Electronic Renaissance" on March 8, 2017 at the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence. — AFP photos



Contemporary master Viola embraces Renaissance roots

He calls it a homecoming. Bill Viola, the acclaimed contemporary artist, is back in Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance masters who inspired some of his most famous works, powerful, immersive video installations dealing with the extremes of human emotion and experience. Four decades after he first worked in the Tuscan capital, the New Yorker regarded as one of the pioneers of video art has returned for a major exhibition that explores the links between his 20th-21st century output and paintings completed between 400 and 600 years earlier.

"It has been really beautiful being in Florence again," Viola, 66, told AFP. "It has been completely emotional just to feel the whole vibe of everything here. We have come back home and that is what it is all about." "Electronic Renaissance" opens to the public on Friday and runs through July 23, with the main collection housed at the Palazzo Strozzi and other works spread over a number of other museums and galleries throughout Tuscany. "Bill is one of the most important living artists. He is one of the fathers of video art and this is the biggest and most complete exhibition of his work ever done," said Strozzi director Arturo Galansino. "But it is so much more than that. For the first time, his installations have been put together with the masterpieces that inspired them."

Parents' death

The exhibition also includes photos and memorabilia from the two years Viola spent working as a video producer with an avant garde art group in Florence in the mid-1970s. Although at the time he did not see the city's artistic treasures influencing his own creative direction, Viola was struck as a young man by the presence of art in everyday life in Italy, and that influenced him long before the overt references to Renaissance art began to emerge in his output from the mid-nineties onwards.

"As a boy from Queens in New York, growing up he had always seen art in a museum, not in the street, in a church etcetera," said Galansino. "Now he talks about the big fresco cycles in churches as art installations." Kira Perov, Viola's wife and career-long collaborator, jointly curated the exhibition. "Bill was really interested in what there was to see in Florence but he only consciously drew on it many years later," she said, describing how his change of direction was influenced by the death of his mother and father in the 1990s. "He came face to face with death, and also our two children were born. And it was then that the whole of emotional content, the humanness of Renaissance art hit him.

"And it really hit him. He became very much influenced by the extreme emotions that were being experienced in these beautiful paintings... it was about grief, it was about loss and that very much shaped his work."

A modern past

Viola himself says: "I just kinda felt it in my gut, outta here, you know. That is where it came from for me, somewhere

down deep—you know, because my parents had gone." The first product of the new direction was "The Greeting", a work inspired by the artist known as Pontormo's "Visitation," (1528-29), which depicts the Virgin Mary greeting her pregnant cousin Elizabeth. In Viola's video version, three women interact in a low-key but intense way in a super slow-motion encounter based on the kind of chance street-corner meeting that had come to fascinate the artist.

Other highlights of the exhibition include the juxtaposition of Florentine artist Paolo Uccello's fresco, "The Flood and Receding of the Waters" with Viola's 2002 video installation, "The Deluge (Going Forth by Day), and his "Man Searching for Immortality/Woman Searching for Eternity," with Weimar artist Lukas Cranach's "Adam, Eve," a 1528 work borrowed from the Uffizi Gallery. Nearly all of the works on show, underline the link between the religious themes that dominated Renaissance art with the spirituality that is ever present in Viola's meditations on birth, death and the cycle of life.

"I know Bill is a religious man but I could not say what his religion is," says Galansino. "But yes, like the Renaissance painters, his work is very spiritual. So in a way what we are proving with this exhibition is how modern the past is." — AFP



US video artist Bill Viola speaks with journalists during a press preview of the exhibition. — AFP

Not a lumberjack? You can still eat a filling breakfast

By Melissa D'Arabian

I am a morning person (by choice, not nature, but that's a story for another time) and breakfast is my favorite meal of the day. Strong coffee and a hearty morning meal make me feel like I'm on vacation, luxuriating in hashed-brown heaven, without a health or calorie care in the world. Breakfast menus at truck stops and diners have incredible appeal to a closeted lumberjack like me, with words like grand-slam and breakfast skillet promising a meal that will fill me up for most of the day. But, eating like a lumberjack when you have a desk job makes no sense, unless you really are on vacation. For a more quotidian option, try my Country-Style Skillet Breakfast.

Onions, sweet yellow peppers, spinach and garlic all add a ton of flavor (and

nutrients) but hardly any calories. The real nutrient and calorie-saving workhorse of this recipe, though, is: cauliflower. I swap out the breakfast-skillet staple hashed browns for riced cauliflower. It works beautifully, and not only do you save the calories of the potatoes, but all the extra fat you need to make those hashed browns crispy and tasty.

You can find riced cauliflower in most neighborhood grocery stores these days, either in the packaged produce aisle or the freezer. Or, simply pulse up a bunch of cauliflower florets in a food processor until it is cut into rice-sized pieces. The cauliflower is just bland enough that it takes on the flavors of the rest of the ingredients and provides enough heft to house eggs broken right into the skillet. The result is rustic, gorgeous, and filling. Yet another reason to celebrate our country's current obsession with cauliflower.



COUNTRY-STYLE CAULIFLOWER BREAKFAST SKILLET

Ingredients

Start to finish: 25 minutes

Servings: 4

1/2 yellow or sweet onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
1/2 yellow bell pepper, chopped (about 1/2 cup)
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon dried herbes de provence (or dried oregano or thyme)
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
3 cup cauliflower rice (raw)

1 tablespoon lemon juice
10 ounce frozen chopped spinach, thawed and excess moisture gently squeezed out
1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Chopped parsley, for garnish
4 eggs, cracked into 4 small ramekins or bowls

Preparation

Preheat oven to 350 F. In large oven-safe skillet. Add onion and bell pepper and cook until tender, about 6 min-

utes. Add the minced garlic, herbs, and smoked paprika and stir. Add the cauliflower and cook until tender, about 5 minutes, stirring frequently. Add the lemon juice, stir, and then the spinach, and stir until well-combined. Remove from heat and sprinkle the cheese evenly over the mixture. Gently make four wells in the mixture with a wooden spoon. Spray each well with nonstick spray. Pour one egg into each well. Bake until eggs are done, about 7-8 minutes for runny yolk, longer for firmer yolk. Sprinkle with black pepper, more salt if needed, parsley and serve. — AP

Chickpea crepes boast flavor and nutrition

By Sara Moulton

I've always loved crepes, those elegant, paper-thin French pancakes. They're great containers for any filling and - as long as you have the proper pan - they're really a cinch to make. But let's face it, the typical flour-based crepe is pretty bland. It's a messenger, not a message. We care far less about the crepe itself than we do about what's wrapped up in it.

But what if the crepe boasted some flavor and nutrition? Enter chickpea flour. Popular throughout the Middle East and Asia, as well as along the Mediterranean, it's a good source of protein and fiber and happens to be quite tasty, almost nutty. Today's recipe is a variation on a swell little chickpea pancake that's known as socca in southern France and farinata in northern Italy.

Made with chickpea flour, water, olive oil and seasonings, socca is pretty

elemental. As noted, it's delicious, but texture-wise, it's sturdy, not pliable. I wanted to make a chickpea pancake that was thin enough to fold like a crepe. So I added some eggs and a tiny amount of flour.

There's a way to make gluten-free chickpea crepes, but you'll have to swap out the regular flour for cornstarch (just be sure it's gluten-free cornstarch) or gluten-free flour. If you roll with the gluten-free flour, you'll need to add an additional tablespoon or two of water to thin out the batter.

What about the filling? Anything you might want to put into a crepe or tortilla, you can put into a chickpea crepe. Here I've taken an Indian vegetarian route: Indian spices, potatoes and peas. But if you happen to be short of time, feel free to combine any leftovers you have in the refrigerator, roll them up in the crepes and heat them in a 300 F oven for about 10 minutes. Instant dinner!! (But without the empty carbs.)



CHICKPEA CREPES STUFFED WITH INDIAN SPICED POTATOES AND PEAS

Ingredients

Start to finish: 1 hour, 10 minutes (45 active)

Servings: 4

For the crepes:

1/2 chickpea flour (60 grams) (available at many supermarkets and online)
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon baking soda

2 large eggs
2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus extra for brushing the pan

For the filling:

1/2 pound Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
2 cups chopped (1/4 to 1/2-inch pieces) cauliflower
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
Salt
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1 teaspoon mustard seeds
1 cup finely chopped onion
2 teaspoons minced chile
2 teaspoons finely chopped ginger
1/2 teaspoon garam masala

1/2 cup thawed frozen peas

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, plus extra for garnish

Preparation

Make the crepes: In a medium bowl sift together the chickpea flour, all-purpose flour, salt and baking soda. In a second medium bowl, whisk the eggs, add 1/2 cup water and the oil; mix well. Add the liquid ingredients to the dry ingredients and whisk until there are no lumps. Let the batter rest for 30 minutes. (Make the filling while the batter is resting.)

Brush the bottom of an 8-inch nonstick skillet and a 1/2-inch up the sides with a little oil and heat the pan over medium-high heat until it is hot. Whisk the batter to remix. Add slightly more than 1/8 cup of the batter to the pan and working quickly, pick up and tilt the pan so that the batter coats the bottom. Let the crepe cook for 45 seconds to 1 minute or until it is set. Flip the crepe and cook it for 30 seconds on the second side. Transfer it to a plate and make more crepes with the remaining batter. You should have at least 8 crepes.

Make the filling

Preheat the oven to 450 F. In a small saucepan combine the potatoes with enough cold, salted water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil and simmer until tender, about 5 to 8 minutes. On a rimmed sheet pan lined with parchment or foil, toss the cauli-

flower with 1 tablespoon of the oil and a hefty pinch of salt. Arrange it in one layer and bake it on the middle shelf of the oven until golden, about 15 to 20 minutes. Set aside and reduce the oven to 300 F.

In a medium skillet combine the remaining 2 tablespoons vegetable oil with the cumin and mustard seeds. Cover the skillet and cook over medium heat until the seeds become fragrant and start popping, about 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low and add the onion, chile, ginger and garam masala. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion is golden.

When the potatoes are tender, transfer them to a bowl and mash them with a potato masher or fork until mostly mashed with a few lumps (don't overdo it or you will get gluey potatoes). Add the cauliflower, onion mixture, peas, lemon juice, cilantro and salt to taste; stir until combined. Arrange 8 crepes on a cutting board and divide the potato mixture among them (about 1/4 cup per crepe). Roll up the crepes to enclose the filling and transfer them to the rimmed sheet, seam side down. Cover with foil and bake them on the middle shelf of the oven until hot, about 10 minutes. — AP



26

Friday Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017

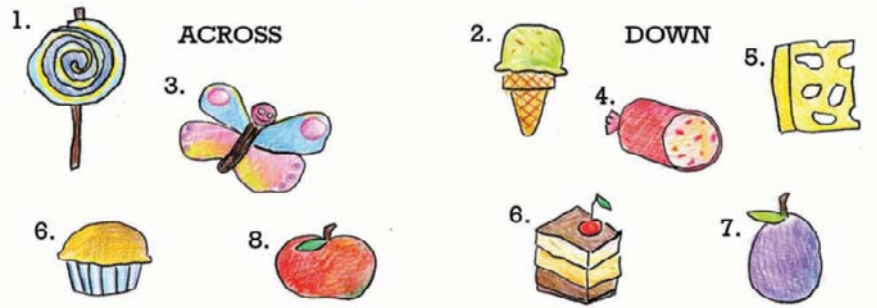
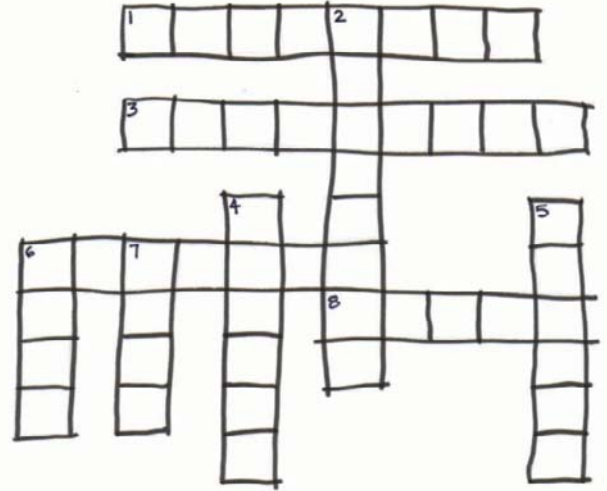
Kids



Color me!



The Very Hungry Caterpillar Crossword Puzzle



WORD BANK

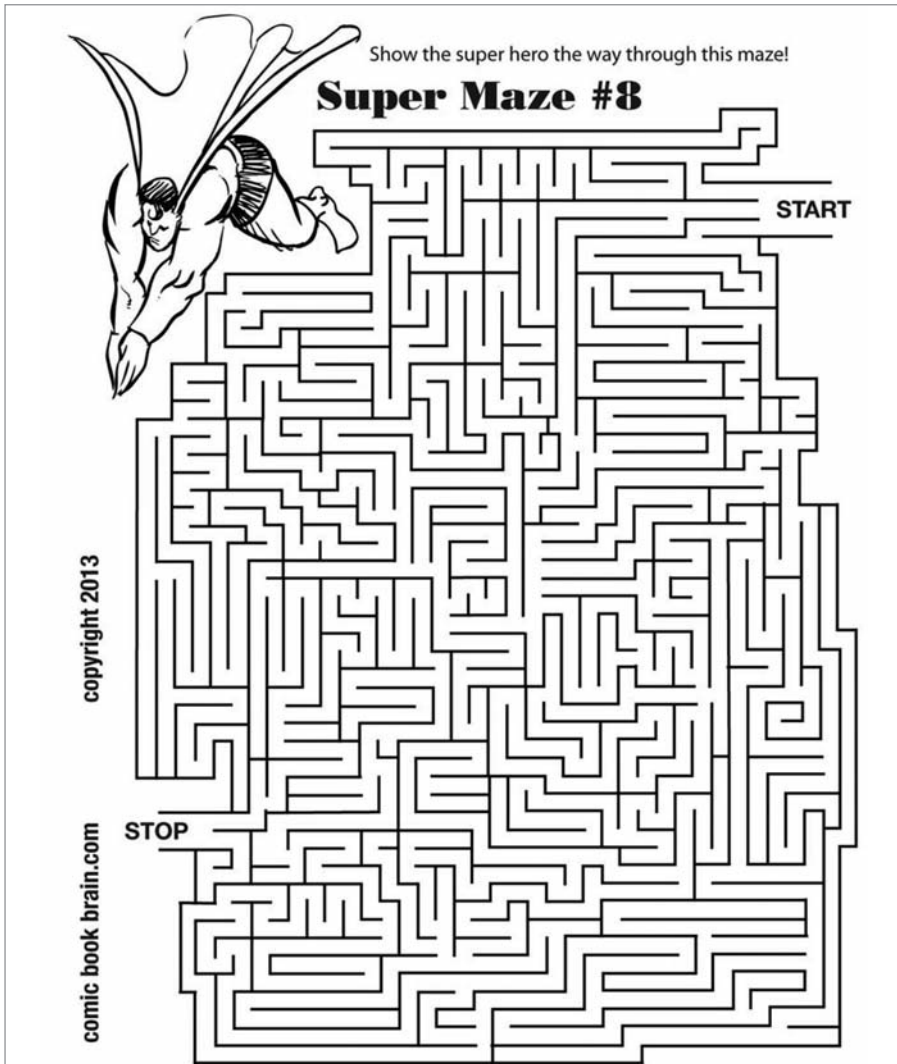
Cross these words off after you've used them.

APPLE
BUTTERFLY
CAKE

CHEESE
CUPCAKE
ICE CREAM

LOLLIPOP
PLUM
SALAMI

Connect the dots





SPRING VOCABULARY WORD SEARCH



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

BLOSSOM
 BUTTERFLY
 CLEANING
 DANDELION
 FLOWERS
 GARDEN
 GREEN
 MAY
 PICNIC
 RAINBOW
 ROBIN
 SHOWERS

Spot the difference



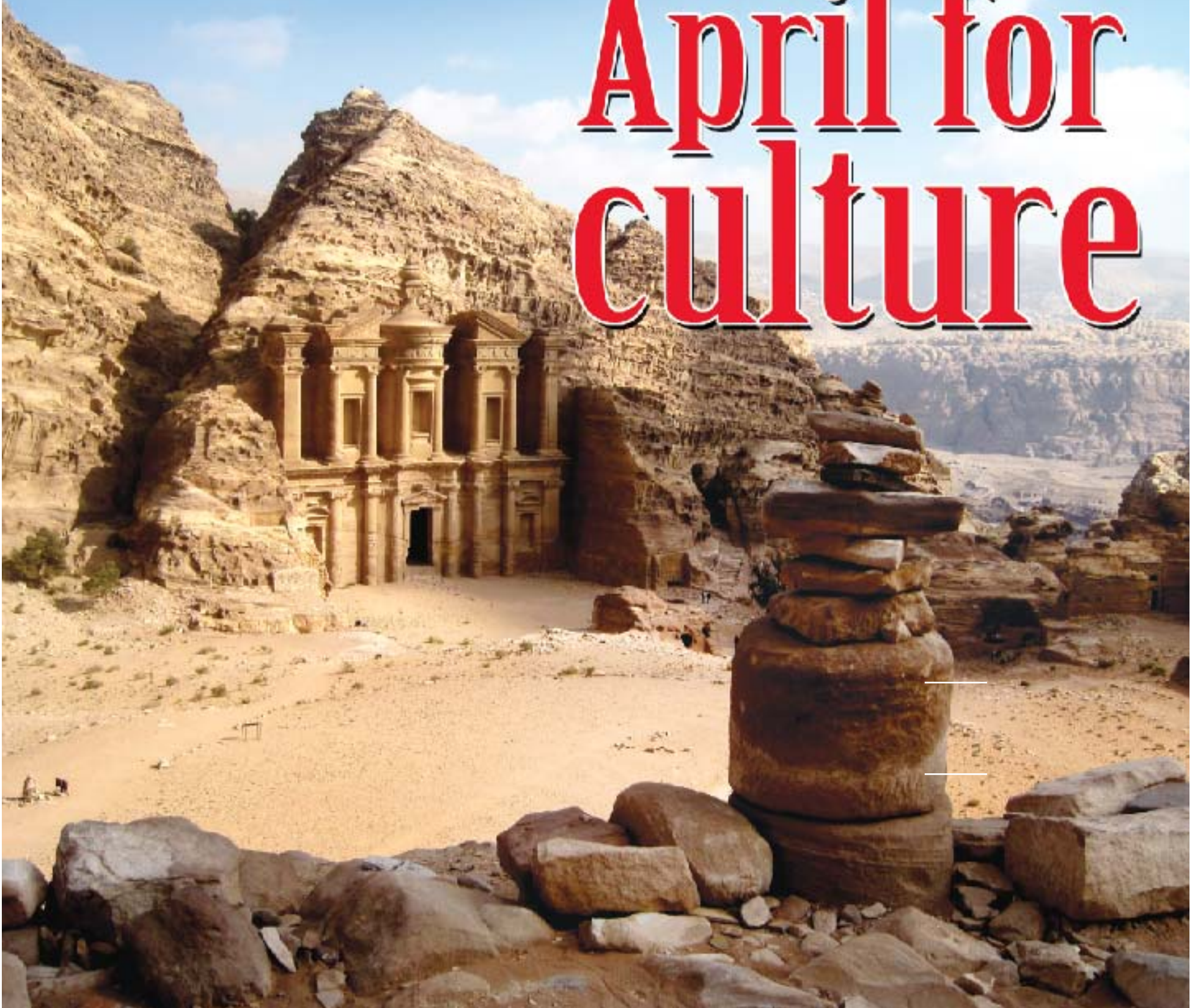
Friday Times

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017

Travel

Where to go in

April for
culture





Between ancient wonders, city-wide water fights and lots of laughs amid mellow weather, there is something for everyone in this round-up of April's cultural offerings. Rub shoulders with Roman gladiators at the Colosseum before summer temperatures hit; get your Indiana Jones on in Jordan; bask in Melbourne's balmy weather and get a bellyful of laughs at the comedy festival; and escape Thailand's scorching heat with water sports galore.

Discover your inner Indiana Jones in Jordan

Compact Jordan is the complete package. Ancient wonders? Visit the 2000-year-old rock-hewn city of Petra or Kerak's Crusader castle. City sights? Try Roman Jerash or the souks of Amman. Jaw-dropping landscapes? Camp in the alien-esque deserts of Wadi Rum. Wildlife? Explore Dana Nature Reserve. Beach? Pick between the salty Dead Sea or snorkel-friendly Red Sea.

More surprisingly, Jordan can also be very green - especially at this time. In April, humidity and rainfall are low, temperatures loiter delightfully around the low 20°Cs (68-73°F), the central valleys are lush from winter rains and there are wildflowers everywhere. In particular, Ajloun Forest is abloom with strawberry trees and rock roses and Dana's oases are bright with oleander and birds. Also, the vastness of Petra can be explored without breaking a sweat. In short, a beautiful time to travel across the country.

Trip plan: From Amman, nip north to Jerash and Ajloun before veering south towards Aqaba, stopping at the Dead Sea, Dana, Petra and Wadi Rum en route.

Need to know: The khamseen (hot, sandy wind) can hit Jordan in spring; it usually only lasts a few days.

Other months: Mar-May - springlike, ideal; Jun-Sep - very hot; Oct - fleeting autumn, pleasant; Nov-Feb - cold in many areas, Aqaba warm.



Get hot and wet with cool festivities in Thailand

All of Thailand sizzles in April - from the highlands of Chiang Mai to the islands of the south, the mercury is rising above 30°C (86°F). Sweaty stuff, but a great time to hit the beach. Ko Samet is an easy white-sand escape from Bangkok; further afield, try paddling around the James Bond karst rocks of Ao Phang Nga, diving off Ko Tao, water sporting on Phuket or simply lolling on offbeat Ko Kood.

If you're stuck in the city, head to one of Bangkok's many rooftop bars for a bit of a breeze. However, come mid-month, cooling down gets easier. Songkran, Thai New Year, is held 13 to 15 April and is celebrated with the world's biggest water fight.

Traditionally, family members gently sprinkled each other for good luck; now water balloons and pump-action pistols are employed. It's all refreshing good fun. Chiang Mai and

Chiang Rai are two of the best places to go for a festive drenching.

Trip plan: Leave boiling Bangkok for the southern beaches as soon as possible. For Songkran celebrations, head north from Bangkok to Chiang Mai (12 hours by train, 70 minutes by plane).

Need to know: During Songkran, don't wear white clothes or expensive watches; consider buying goggles.



Spring temperatures make Rome ideal for sightseeing

History buffs might like to visit Rome on its birthday. The Eternal City was founded on 21 April 753 BC, and every year it celebrates with events, illuminations and truck-loads of fireworks.

Festivities aside, April to May is a delightful time to visit. Rome is a city for sightseeing, which is far better done on milder spring days

(15-20°C; 59-68°F) than in the depths of winter or heights of summer with the largely shadeless Forum being particularly unforgiving in the latter. It's also less busy (and a little cheaper), though seasonal attractions are open; for instance, atmospheric after-dark tours of the Colosseum run April to October. To top it all, menus fill with good spring

things, such as artichokes and asparagus. Vignarola, a Roman speciality combining peas, fava beans, lettuce and artichokes is the season's signature dish.

Trip plan: Rome warrants several days. As well as visiting its famed ruins and piazzas, take a walk along the Via Appia (the first

Roman road), which is particularly handsome in spring.

Need to know: Free drinking water is available from nasoni (public fountains) across the city.

Other months: Apr-May & Sep-Oct - manageable weather, quieter; Jun-Aug - sweltering; Nov-Mar - cool, wet.

Head to Melbourne for laughs, mellow weather and fewer people

It's all happening in Melbourne in March. The city explodes with events: Fashion Festival, Food & Wine Festival, Formula 1 Grand Prix. Which is great - if you want to fight your way to the bar and pay a premium for your bed... Alternatively, wait until April and visit Australia's culture capital when there's more room to breathe.

The Comedy Festival (the world's third-largest laugh-fest) runs to the middle of the month anyway; the pleasant autumnal weather continues (highs around 20°C; 68°F), but the city isn't so overrun. That means you'll have more space while browsing the creative laneways, walking in the Botanic Gardens (afire with autumn colour), cycling the buzzy neighbourhoods of Fitzroy, Collingwood and Carlton, and strolling seaside St Kilda. If you do get some autumn rain, shelter in one of Melbourne's 100-plus art galleries or aboard the free City Circle Tram.

Trip plan: Allow at least three days. Make time to explore the inner-city suburbs, where the best bars and cafes are found. The vineyard-streaked Yarra Valley makes a lovely, easy escape, especially during autumn's grape harvest.

Need to know: Free wi-fi is available in public spaces, including in Federation Sq.

Other months: Dec-Feb - very hot; Mar-May - milder, festivals; Jun-Aug - cold, wet; Sep-Nov - mild, quieter. (www.lonelyplanet.com)





Aries (March 21-April 19)

If a subject matter, person, place or some other thing makes you feel negative, it would be a good idea to move away from the situation as soon as possible. You do your best work when you are surrounded with pleasant and beautiful creations. However, some research, volunteer group or other place or thing may present an important factor to your work, education or curiosity. Production time is limited today but there is just enough time to ask your questions and make your report. This afternoon a change of attention can easily be found through your continuous search to stay on top of the latest technical developments. Meeting friends after work you will find many fun conversations based around the newest inventions.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your communicative abilities are emphasized today. This is an excellent time to sway others to your cause through speeches or clever arguments-your thinking is most lucid and grasping. Be careful not to take things to the extreme in trying to find a logical reason for every event that occurs, particularly the actions of loved ones. Independence, as well as anything unusual or different, is valued. This is a perfect time to be assertive and to move forward in your career. You have all the drive and energy you could want for today. It should be easy to channel this energy in positive ways. The path is open and clear. Eventually, there will be stability in your earning power. All indications point to the possibility of a joint business being successful.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Extra responsibility comes with almost everything you do at this time: professional life, romance, creativity or being with children. Give yourself a little extra time and take a deep breath; you are up to the job! High-level differences of opinion or outlook represent an important area of change in your life. This extends to fundamental religious or philosophical beliefs, which cry out for reexamination in the light of new information and influences. Educational projects require much study and may also involve travel. Fresh insight comes to you through the process of reading and listening to the news and drawing your own conclusion. You might think about some volunteer time for the community schools. This evening, your basic drive is to just appreciate life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The success of your work this day may be the insights that you gain after you step away from the technical for a short time. With fresh vision your energies pick up and you can complete some work that you thought might go on forever. Consider this for future reference when you feel stuck in a mindset or technical issue. You need to be consumed by an activity that is diverse and quickly handled so that you see progress happening. You might consider a profession as a writer, hair stylist, chef, editor, etc. Your financial sector is highlighted in a positive way at this time. Better budgeting is in the forecast. Your personal life flows more easily this evening. While you are in a focused frame of mind, you would be wise to mend any hard feelings with others.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is one of your best overall days. You will be self-assertive, independent and see clearly what your own interests are for this whole month. It is time for deep thought about any career change or conditions that affect your reputation. It is essential to become more effective in expressing your thoughts as well as knowing how to gain information from others by asking the right questions. Obtaining and exchanging information take on more emotional significance for you now. You could clash with young people or old habits this afternoon. Your support system may feel stressed, but the stress is of short duration. Gather together those you live with and have a vote on some activity that all can enjoy for the coming weekend. Enjoy creating family rituals.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may be guiding others with information about their job search. If you are not helping them to find jobs you may be helping to guide them in keeping their jobs. You often counsel people as they search for better jobs or adapt to higher achievement within their present profession. This comes so naturally to you that you do not hear when others give you compliments. Today you may be pleased at the rewards that come your way. At home this afternoon you may decide to look into the art of feng shui. Although you have some wonderful ideas for balance and beauty in your surroundings, you continuously look to improve and be inspired. Consider a group interest that will help you draw closer to your loved ones such as music, concerts, diet, etc.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Outer circumstances and the flow of events make it easy for you to make clear decisions, see the road ahead and move forward. Today is made up of a work-in-progress and clearing away old business. Things seem to fall in place and progress is easy. Be careful not to overextend your energies. Acting on impulse can be riskier than usual-get a grip. You will want to shape events now-not be shaped by them! This is a good day for thinking creatively, not necessarily with any particular action. You may feel like talking a bit more than usual, exploring new ideas or getting happily lost in a conversation. There will be an urge to make a point or have the last word. Also, perhaps a short trip or a special phone call is in order for this evening.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find it very easy to overdo or work at cross-purposes to yourself, and learning how to pace yourself would be a wise move. You can improve your finances and your associates if you put a little more effort into the focus of your goals. Business and your earning skills will be the highlight this month. It might be a good idea to check out some of those new business ideas or some new business dealings. You are alert, in a business frame of mind, and will be able to secure any positive opportunities that cross your path. Everything points to your taking the initiative. You could feel great support from those around you. Others could seek you out for your psychological insight. You may enjoy chatting with a friend about a hobby this evening.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You will find today an easy, calm day and you should find everything running in a smooth manner. Things are happening and your career or path depends upon your own ambition and drive, which are strong now. You are able to use good common sense to feel trends and make the right choices for yourself. Ideas and interaction with authority figures or older people have a tendency to end on a positive note. Working with the flow of work should be easy to accomplish. Your good communication skills are important in your workplace and you are able to get some important ideas and instructions across to others. You may be noticing some improvements of your finances now. Both work and home are good places to be today.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are most practical and conscientious and others want you to help get things accomplished. Taking care of the necessary things on your list becomes a great preoccupation. Sorting things out and getting them organized to utmost efficiency keep you busy. Important financial decisions require more information than you realize at this time. It's important to gather all the facts necessary to give you a realistic idea of your involvement. Figuring things out, spotting the fly in the ointment, separating the sheep from the goats-these things take on special significance now. Social relationships are a special focus this afternoon. You may find that as this year continues, changes in friends, fair-weather or intimate, will move into a more positive direction.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today marks a time when you could easily become deluded with respect to your own goals and ambitions. If you spend all of your time thinking about what you want to do and not taking any action, the opportunity to achieve will be changed or gone. You will have an opportunity to sign up for a class that will help to expand your knowledge of new technologies. You can increase your value on the job by learning these new methods or technologies. Because of your vast reading interests, you may feel like jumping into unusual conversations with others. You probably feel that communication with most anyone is enjoyable. If you are not involved in a love relationship now, you may meet someone soon.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Remember when you were a child; you may have been most appreciative toward the scoundrel of the classroom or the most notorious jewel thief. Your curiosity was probably not for future use as a thief but as perhaps a police officer or designer of burglar systems, a guard or a writer. You may have always been fascinated with the talent it takes to think through some of the difficult situations with which a thief can be faced. They refuse to follow the rules of society. To outfox the fox would be the height of your imagination and talents and you of all people could succeed, if you but knew this. If you have not done anything with this talent to show off your genius ideas, go back and think again; you have great potential.

COUNTRY CODES

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



00:20 Street Outlaws
01:10 What On Earth?
02:00 Legend Of Croc Gold
02:50 The Wheel: Survival Games
03:40 Fast N' Loud
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 How Do They Do It?
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Made By Destruction
06:25 Made By Destruction
06:50 How Do They Do It?
07:15 How Do They Do It?
07:40 Impossible Engineering
08:30 Legend Of Croc Gold
09:20 Everest Rescue
10:10 The Wheel: Survival Games
11:00 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
11:50 Storage Hunters UK
12:15 Storage Hunters UK
12:40 Manhunt With Joel Lambert
13:30 Wheeler Dealers
14:20 Diesel Brothers
15:10 Street Outlaws
16:00 Legend Of Croc Gold
16:50 Legend Of Croc Gold
17:40 Legend Of Croc Gold
18:30 Legend Of Croc Gold
21:00 Wheeler Dealers
21:50 Diesel Brothers
22:40 Street Outlaws
23:30 Rise Of The Warrior Apes



00:00 It Takes A Killer
00:30 It Takes A Killer
01:00 The First 48
02:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
03:00 Homicide Hunter
04:00 It Takes A Killer
04:30 It Takes A Killer
05:00 The First 48
06:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
07:00 Deadly Wives
08:00 Deadly Wives
09:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
10:00 Homicide Hunter
11:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
15:00 Deadly Wives
16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 Killers
19:00 It Takes A Killer
19:30 It Takes A Killer
20:00 The First 48
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Deadly Wives
23:00 The First 48



00:30 Prototype This
01:20 NASA's Greatest Missions
02:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Dirty Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 Bondi Vet
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Prototype This
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Bondi Vet
12:00 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Dirty Jobs
14:30 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
14:55 Awesome Adventures
15:20 Mythbusters
16:10 Prototype This
17:00 Battle Bots
17:50 Breaking Magic
18:15 Breaking Magic
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Battle Bots
22:00 Breaking Magic
22:25 Breaking Magic
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor



00:10 Hank Zipzer
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Violetta
01:45 The Hive
01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Hank Zipzer
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Violetta
04:15 The Hive
04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:10 Hank Zipzer
05:35 Binny And The Ghost
06:00 Violetta
06:45 The Hive
06:50 The 7D
07:00 Jessie
07:25 Jessie
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 The Zhuzhus
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 Stuck In The Middle
09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
10:25 A.N.T. Farm
11:15 Good Luck Charlie
12:05 Shake It Up
12:30 Shake It Up
12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
13:00 Welcome To The Ronks
13:15 Gravity Falls
13:40 Hank Zipzer
14:05 Star Darlings
14:10 Austin & Ally
14:35 Jessie
15:00 Bunk'd
15:25 Kirby Buckets
15:50 Sunny Bunnies

15:55 The Zhuzhus
16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:45 Elena Of Avalor
17:10 Stuck In The Middle
17:35 Disney's Descendants
19:25 The Next Step
19:50 Austin & Ally
20:15 Star Darlings
20:20 Shake It Up
20:45 Backstage
21:10 Liv And Maddie
21:35 Cracked
21:40 Dog With A Blog
22:05 Best Friends Whenever
22:30 Jessie
22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts



00:20 Henry Hugglemonster
00:35 The Hive
00:45 Loopdidoo
01:00 Henry Hugglemonster
01:15 Calimero
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Zou
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Zou
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive
03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Zou
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo

07:00 Zou
07:15 Calimero
07:30 Loopdidoo
07:45 Henry Hugglemonster
08:00 Minnie's Bow-Toons
08:05 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
08:15 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
08:30 Miles From Tomorrow
08:45 Goldie & Bear
08:55 The Lion Guard
09:20 PJ Masks
09:35 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
09:50 Doc McStuffins
10:00 Goldie & Bear
10:15 PJ Masks
10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
10:35 The Lion Guard
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
11:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
12:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
12:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:15 Gummi Bears
13:40 Sofia The First
14:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:35 PJ Masks
15:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
15:30 The Lion Guard
15:55 Unbungalievable
16:00 Sofia The First
16:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
16:55 Goldie & Bear
17:20 The Lion Guard
17:50 PJ Masks
18:15 Sofia The First
18:40 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
20:00 The Lion Guard
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Unbungalievable
21:05 Goldie & Bear
21:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse



06:00 Gravity Falls
06:25 Counterfeit Cat
06:50 Atomic Puppet
07:15 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 Danger Mouse
07:40 Supa Strikas
08:10 K.C. Undercover
08:35 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
09:00 Lab Rats
09:25 Lab Rats
09:50 Danger Mouse
10:20 Supa Strikas
10:45 Supa Strikas
11:10 Counterfeit Cat
11:35 Pair Of Kings
12:00 Pair Of Kings
12:30 Future-Worm!
12:55 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
13:45 Atomic Puppet
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Counterfeit Cat
14:40 Supa Strikas
15:05 Lab Rats
15:30 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
15:55 Right Now Kapow
16:25 K.C. Undercover
16:50 Future-Worm!
17:15 Gravity Falls
17:40 Lab Rats
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Mighty Med
18:35 Right Now Kapow
19:00 Atomic Puppet
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Kickin' It
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Danger Mouse
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
22:10 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

16:00 Don't Tell The Bride
17:00 Tonight At The London Palladium
17:50 Home Fires
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
21:00 Don't Tell The Bride
22:00 Tonight At The London Palladium



00:15 This Is Brazil
01:05 Miguel's Feasts
01:30 Dog Whisperer
02:20 Top Chef Top Table: Seoul
02:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
03:35 Sara's Australia Unveiled
04:25 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
04:50 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
05:20 The Wine Show
06:15 One Man & His Campervan
06:40 One Man & His Campervan
07:10 Miguel's Feasts
07:35 Dog Whisperer
08:30 Top Chef Top Table: Seoul
09:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
09:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
09:55 Sara's Australia Unveiled
10:20 Sara's Australia Unveiled
10:50 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
11:15 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
11:45 One Man & His Campervan
12:10 One Man & His Campervan
12:40 Miguel's Feasts
13:05 Dog Whisperer
14:00 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
14:30 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
14:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
15:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
15:50 Sara's Australia Unveiled
16:20 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
16:45 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
17:15 The Wine Show
18:10 One Man & His Campervan
18:35 One Man & His Campervan
19:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
19:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
20:00 Sara's Australia Unveiled
20:30 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
20:55 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
21:20 The Wine Show
22:10 One Man & His Campervan
22:35 One Man & His Campervan
23:00 Miguel's Feasts
23:25 Dog Whisperer



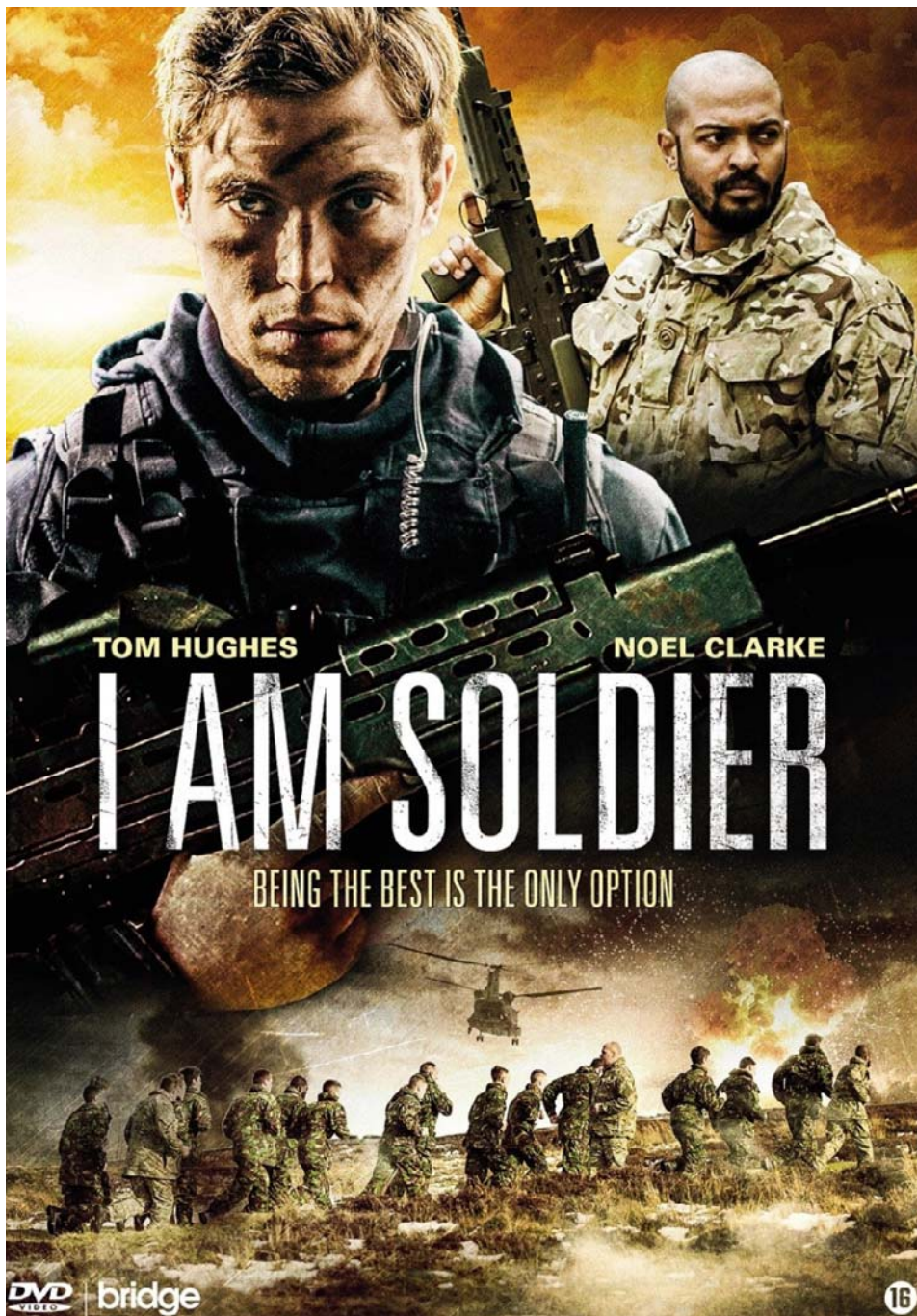
00:05 So Cosmo
00:55 So Cosmo
01:50 E! News
02:50 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Just Jillian
06:55 E! News
07:10 Just Jillian
08:10 E! News
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News
15:15 So Cosmo
16:10 So Cosmo
17:05 Botched
18:00 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
21:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
22:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
23:00 E! News
23:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Jonathan Ross Show
03:25 Don't Tell The Bride
04:25 5 Star Family Reunion
05:15 Home Fires
06:10 The Chase
07:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
08:00 Don't Tell The Bride
09:00 5 Star Family Reunion
10:00 Home Fires
10:55 The Chase
11:50 The Jonathan Ross Show
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 The Chase
15:10 The Jonathan Ross Show



00:10 Inside: 21st Century Warship
02:00 Locked Up Abroad
02:55 Ultimate Airport Dubai
03:50 Air Crash Investigation
04:45 The Numbers Game
05:40 Car SOS
06:35 Crimes Against Nature
07:30 Mine Kings
08:25 Battleground Brothers
09:20 Street Genius
09:45 Street Genius
10:15 Locked Up Abroad
11:10 The Border
12:05 Route Awakening



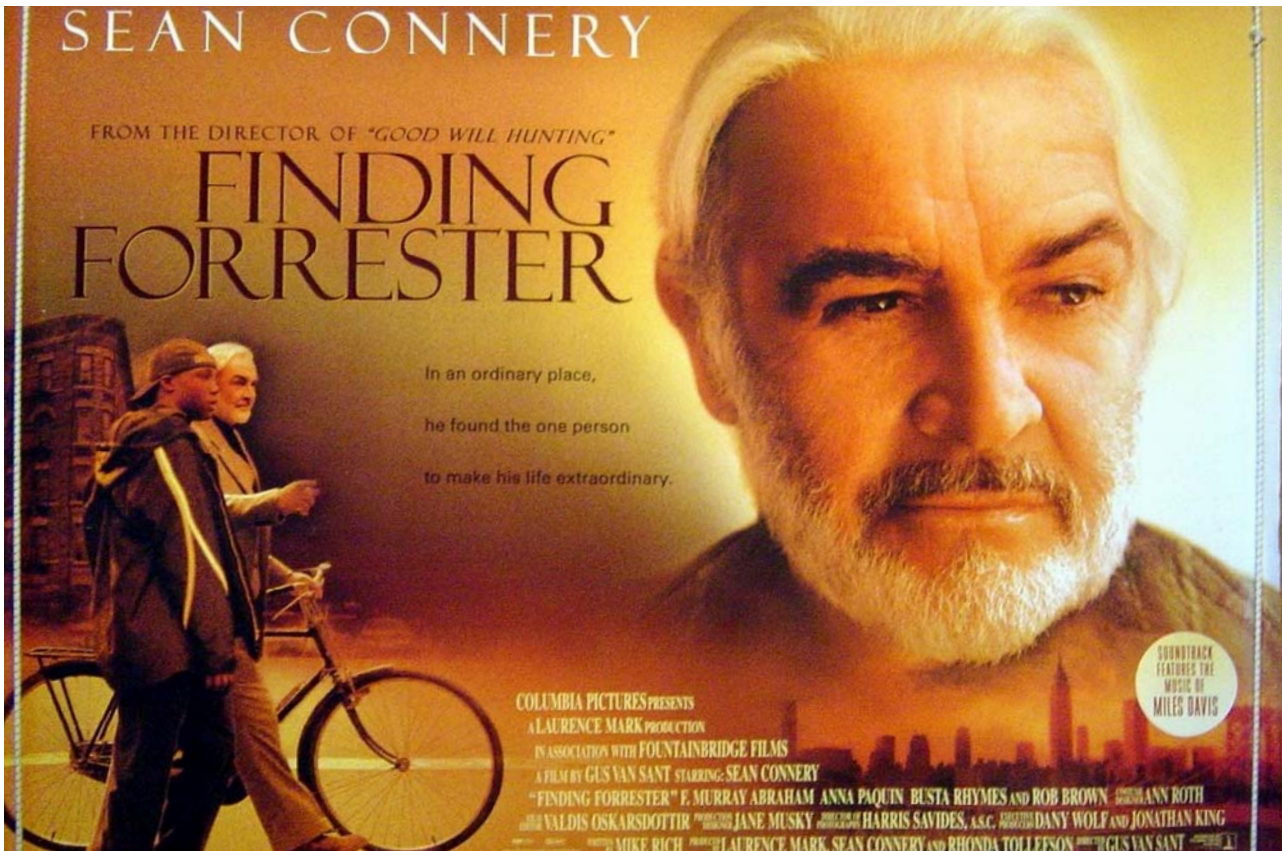
I AM SOLDIER ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017

- 12:30 Route Awakening
- 13:00 Genius By Stephen Hawking
- 14:00 Miracle Hospital
- 14:30 Miracle Hospital
- 15:00 Crimes Against Nature
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 The Border
- 18:00 Taboo USA
- 19:00 A Brave Heart: The Lizzie Velasquez Story
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 The Border
- 21:40 Taboo USA
- 22:30 A Brave Heart: The Lizzie



- 00:19 Team Umizoomi
- 00:41 Louie
- 00:48 Louie
- 00:54 Olive The Ostrich
- 00:59 Olive The Ostrich
- 01:04 Max & Ruby
- 01:28 Wanda And The Alien
- 01:38 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 01:48 The Day Henry Met
- 01:53 The Day Henry Met
- 01:59 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:23 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:45 Zack & Quack
- 03:07 Team Umizoomi
- 03:30 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:35 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:40 Paw Patrol
- 04:03 Little Charmers
- 04:15 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 04:27 Dora The Explorer
- 04:49 Max & Ruby
- 05:13 Bubble Guppies
- 05:37 Shimmer And Shine
- 06:00 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 06:22 Zack & Quack
- 06:33 The Day Henry Met
- 06:38 The Day Henry Met
- 06:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 07:06 Paw Patrol
- 07:19 Paw Patrol
- 07:43 Dora The Explorer
- 08:00 Zack & Quack
- 08:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 09:10 Paw Patrol
- 09:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 09:58 Dora The Explorer
- 10:21 Paw Patrol
- 10:45 Little Charmers
- 10:57 Bubble Guppies
- 11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 11:40 Zack & Quack
- 11:52 Team Umizoomi
- 12:15 Team Umizoomi
- 12:38 Louie
- 12:45 Louie
- 12:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 12:58 Olive The Ostrich
- 13:03 Max & Ruby
- 13:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 13:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 13:46 The Day Henry Met
- 13:51 The Day Henry Met
- 13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 14:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 14:41 Zack & Quack
- 15:03 Team Umizoomi
- 15:25 Olive The Ostrich
- 15:30 Olive The Ostrich
- 15:35 Paw Patrol
- 15:58 Little Charmers
- 16:10 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 16:22 Dora The Explorer
- 16:44 Max & Ruby
- 17:07 Bubble Guppies
- 17:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 17:54 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 18:17 Zack & Quack
- 18:29 The Day Henry Met
- 18:34 The Day Henry Met
- 18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 19:00 Paw Patrol
- 19:13 Paw Patrol
- 19:37 Dora The Explorer
- 20:00 Zack & Quack
- 20:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 20:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 21:10 Paw Patrol
- 21:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 21:58 Dora The Explorer
- 22:21 Paw Patrol
- 22:45 Little Charmers
- 22:57 Bubble Guppies



FINDING FORRESTER ON OSN MOVIES HD

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:00 I Am Soldier
- 02:00 Reign Of Fire
- 04:00 Jurassic Hunters
- 06:00 Code Of Silence
- 08:00 Close Range
- 09:45 Echo Effect
- 11:45 Reign Of Fire
- 13:30 Blunt Force Trauma
- 15:15 The World Is Not Enough
- 17:30 Die Another Day
- 20:00 San Andreas
- 22:00 Troy

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 00:00 American Girl: Saige Paints The Sky
- 02:00 Marvel's Iron Man & Captain America: Heroes United
- 03:30 The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement
- 05:30 Atlantis: The Lost Empire
- 07:30 Marvel's Iron Man & Captain America: Heroes United
- 09:00 Atlantis: Milo's Return
- 11:00 The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement
- 13:00 The Emperor's New Groove
- 15:00 Mars Needs Moms
- 17:00 The Sorcerer's Apprentice
- 19:00 The Haunted Mansion
- 21:00 Frankenweenie
- 23:00 Mars Needs Moms

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:45 Adult World
- 02:30 War Of The Worlds
- 04:30 Finding Forrester
- 06:45 October Sky
- 08:45 The Chronicles Of Narnia: Voyage Of The Dawn...
- 10:45 War Of The Worlds
- 12:45 Up Close And Personal
- 15:00 McFarland, USA
- 17:15 S.W.A.T.
- 19:30 Blood Diamond
- 22:00 Straight Outta Compton

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Bad Words
- 02:00 Kicking And Screaming
- 04:00 Under The Tuscan Sun
- 06:00 Trust Me
- 08:00 Kicking And Screaming
- 10:00 Under The Tuscan Sun
- 12:00 Trust Me
- 14:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2
- 16:00 Confessions Of A Shopaholic

OSN MOVIES HD

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 00:00 Starred Up
- 01:45 Spotlight
- 04:00 Ed Wood
- 06:15 Still Alice
- 08:00 WarGames
- 10:00 The Man Who Wasn't There
- 12:00 Spotlight
- 14:15 We Are Many
- 16:15 The Yellow Handkerchief
- 18:00 Whiplash
- 20:00 The Rainmaker
- 22:15 2001: A Space Odyssey

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:30 Hey Arnold! The Movie
- 03:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 04:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
- 06:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 07:30 Cher Ami
- 09:15 The Adventures Of Rocky And Bullwinkle
- 11:00 Hey Arnold! The Movie
- 12:30 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 14:00 The Unbeatables
- 16:00 The Adventures Of Rocky And Bullwinkle
- 17:45 Big Baby
- 19:15 The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya
- 21:30 The Unbeatables
- 23:15 Cher Ami



- 00:40 Mythbusters
- 01:30 How Do They Do It?
- 01:55 Food Factory
- 02:20 Food Factory USA
- 02:45 Food Factory USA
- 03:10 Close Encounters
- 03:35 Close Encounters
- 04:00 Kings Of Construction
- 04:48 Mythbusters
- 05:36 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Food Factory
- 06:24 Food Factory USA
- 06:49 Food Factory USA
- 07:12 Close Encounters
- 07:37 Close Encounters
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 Kings Of Construction
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Close Encounters
- 10:27 Close Encounters

- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 How The Earth Works
- 12:26 Kings Of Construction
- 13:14 Mythbusters
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 Close Encounters
- 15:15 Close Encounters
- 15:38 Kings Of Construction
- 16:26 Food Factory USA
- 16:51 Food Factory USA
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 Close Encounters
- 18:27 Close Encounters
- 18:50 Kings Of Construction
- 19:40 Mythbusters
- 20:30 Mythbusters
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 Close Encounters
- 22:35 Close Encounters
- 23:00 Mythbusters
- 23:50 Kings Of Construction



- 00:20 Oprah's Master Class
- 01:10 Single Dad Seeking...
- 02:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Oprah's Master Class
- 04:20 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 06:50 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 07:40 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 08:30 Little People, Big World
- 09:20 Designer Darlings
- 10:10 Ultimate Shopper
- 11:00 Ultimate Shopper
- 11:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:15 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:40 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:05 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:30 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 14:45 Oprah's Master Class
- 15:35 Cake Boss
- 16:00 Cake Boss
- 16:25 Cake Boss
- 16:50 Cake Boss
- 17:15 Cake Boss
- 17:40 Cake Boss
- 18:05 Cake Boss
- 18:30 Cake Boss
- 18:55 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 19:20 Little People, Big World
- 20:10 Designer Darlings
- 21:00 Little People, Big World
- 21:50 Sister Wives
- 22:40 Too Ugly For Love?
- 23:30 Return To Amish

- 17:00 The Human Calculator
- 18:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 19:00 Patton 360
- 20:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 21:00 The Universe
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 23:00 Engineering Disasters

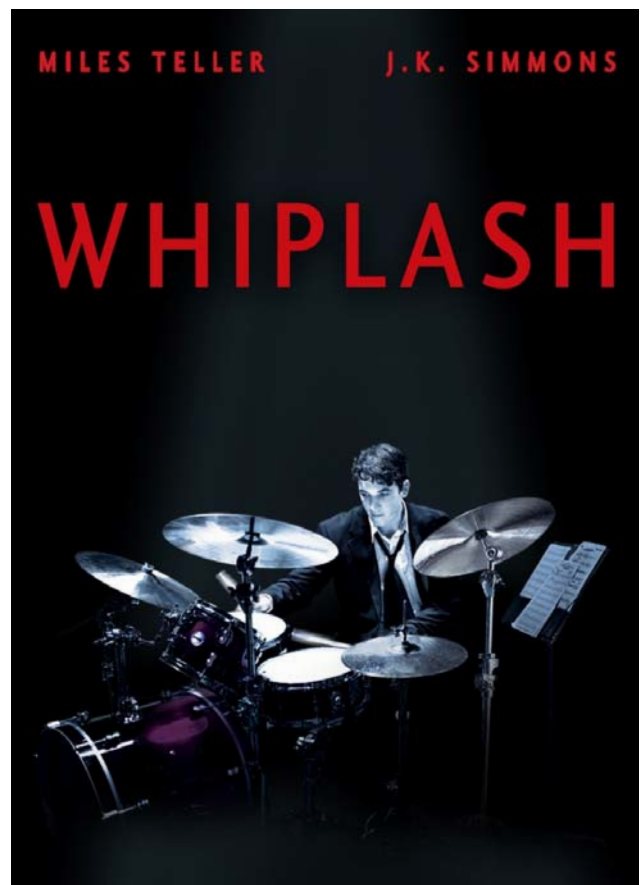


- 00:20 Battle 360
- 01:10 Outlaw Chronicles: Hells Angels
- 02:00 Search For The Lost Giants
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 06:50 Time Team
- 07:40 Battle 360
- 08:30 Shark Wranglers
- 09:20 Ice Road Truckers
- 10:10 Swamp People
- 11:00 American Pickers
- 11:50 Counting Cars
- 12:15 Car Hunters
- 12:40 Pawn Stars
- 13:05 Pawn Stars Best Of
- 13:30 American Pickers
- 18:30 Shipping Wars
- 18:55 Shipping Wars
- 19:20 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
- 20:10 Ice Road Truckers
- 21:00 American Pickers
- 21:50 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American



- 00:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 01:00 Patton 360
- 02:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 03:50 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 04:40 The Human Calculator
- 05:30 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 06:20 Patton 360
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 10:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
- 11:00 The Human Calculator
- 12:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 13:00 Patton 360
- 14:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 16:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence

- 00:00 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 06:00 The Kitchen
- 07:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:00 Siba's Table
- 09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:00 Siba's Table
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 19:00 Luke Nguyen's United Kingdom
- 20:00 Follow Donal... To Europe
- 21:00 Girl Eat World
- 22:00 Iron Chef America



WHIPLASH ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

Word Search Puzzles

Phonetic Alphabet

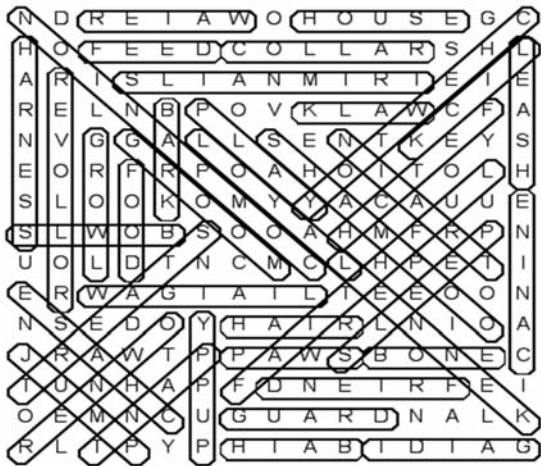
Find and circle the Phonetic Alphabet words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word from the Phonetic Alphabet.

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

- ALPHA HOTEL OSCAR UNIFORM
- BRAVO INDIA PAPA VICTOR
- CHARLIE JULIET QUEBEC WHISKEY
- DELTA KILO ROMEO X-RAY
- ECHO LIMA SIERRA YANKEE
- FOXTROT MIKE TANGO ZULU
- GOLF

Yesterday's Solution

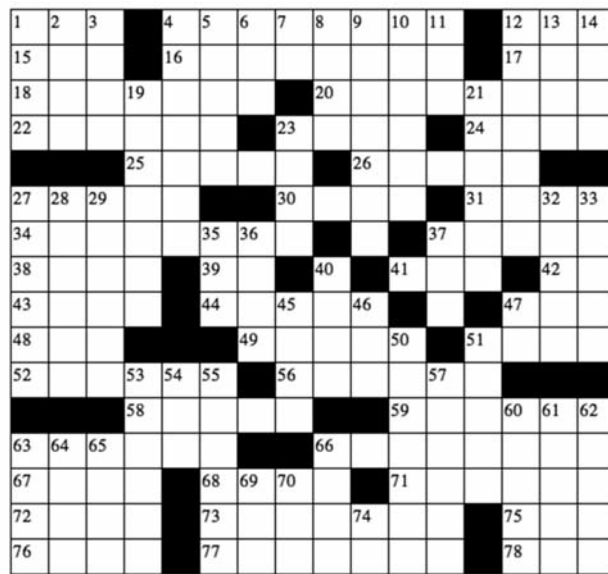
Pet Dog



- BARK FEED ID TAG PUPPY
- BATH FETCH JUMP ROLL OVER
- BONE FOOD KENNEL SHAMPOO
- BOWLS FRIEND LEASH SLEEP
- CANINE GROOM LICK TRAIN
- CHASE GROWL LOYAL TREATS
- CHEW TOY GUARD OWNER TRIM NAILS
- COLLAR HAIR PANT WAG TAIL
- COMPANION HARNESS PAWS WALK
- FAITHFUL HOUSE PLAY WATER

The hidden message is: DOGS LOVE YOU UNCONDITIONALLY

CROSSWORD 1543



ACROSS

1. A pointed tool for marking surfaces or for punching small holes.
4. Old-fashioned and out of date.
12. The seventh and last day of the week.
15. Perennial herb of East India to Polynesia and Australia cultivated for its large edible root yielding Otaheite arrowroot starch.
16. Minimal meaningful language unit.
17. (Roman mythology) Goddess of abundance and fertility.
18. Apoapsis in orbit around the moon.
20. Lack of strength or vigor esp from illness.
22. Any plant of the genus Reseda.
24. Not far distant in time or space or degree or circumstances.
25. Metal or plastic sheath over the end of a shoelace or ribbon.
26. A group of Plains Indians formerly living in what is now North and South Dakota and Nebraska and Kansas and Arkansas and Louisiana and Oklahoma and Texas.
27. Avoid or try to avoid, as of duties, questions and issues.
30. A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
31. A town in north central Oklahoma.
34. A mixture of gases (mostly methane) that form in coal mines and become explosive when mixed with air.
38. Free from favoritism or self-interest or bias or deception.
39. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
41. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
42. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
43. Oval reproductive body of a fowl (especially a hen) used as food.
44. Affected with or marked by frenzy or mania uncontrolled by reason.
48. Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.
49. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
52. Animal food for browsing or grazing.
56. A promise.
58. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
59. A seat with a cushion that is used as a throne by Indian princes.

DOWN

1. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
2. The act of rubbing or wiping.
3. A mountainous landlocked communist state in southeastern Asia.
4. Smear with something that soils or stains.
5. Employing variations in pitch to distinguish meanings of otherwise similar words.
6. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
7. A radioactive transuranic metallic element.
8. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
9. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
10. The sodium salt of amobarbital that is used as a barbiturate.
11. Being one more than nine.
12. A human being.
13. The capital of Western Samoa.
14. A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
19. The body of people who lead a group.
21. Relating to the Andes and their inhabitants.
23. The event of something ending.
28. Virility drug (trade name Viagra) used to treat erectile dysfunction in men.
29. In a correct manner.
32. Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.
33. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
35. A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
36. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
37. A flexible container with a single opening.
40. A tax on employees and employers that is used to fund the Social Security system.
45. Type genus of the Nepidae.
46. 4-wheeled motor vehicle.
47. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
50. Ancient city southeast of Naples that was buried by a volcanic eruption from Vesuvius.
51. A unit of magnetic flux density equal to one weber per square meter.
53. A port city in southwestern Iran.
54. Light informal conversation for social occasions.
55. A card game for 2 players.
57. Port city on Atlantic coast.
60. (KNO3) Used especially as a fertilizer and explosive.
61. Act in concert or unite in a common purpose or belief.
62. Coffee with the caffeine removed.
64. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
65. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
66. City in southwestern Colombia in a rich agricultural area.
69. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
70. The compass point that is one point west of due north.
74. In operation or operational.

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

FROM GRAVE TO LAB: SHE THROWS SCIENCE AT COLD CASES

TAMPA: Dr. Erin Kimmerle stands at the head of an open, watery grave and peers down. It's a sweltering fall day in Tampa, and she's looking at the grave of a murder victim. The woman's body was found in a patch of scrub brush in 1985 just outside downtown Tampa. Detectives never discovered her name or cause of death. DNA wasn't analyzed. They weren't sure how she was slain, when or why.

There was little hope of solving the case. Heavy caseloads, a lack of money and no relatives coming forward meant police moved on. The woman lay in this pauper's grave in a city cemetery for more than 30 years. Now, Kimmerle - a former UN International Criminal Tribunal investigator, an anthropology professor and a 44-year-old married mother of two - might be the woman's only chance for justice.

Kimmerle knows it's a long shot. But maybe if she's detailed enough, she'll identify the body and find relatives. Surely, someone, somewhere loved this woman. Detectives, students and researchers gather as Kimmerle stares into the void. Her gloved hands brace her body as she eases into the hole. Stepping nearly all the way in, she leans over and peels away dirty plastic: a grave liner.

She and her team remove it and hit a muddy body bag. The corpse was buried in a cardboard casket. That's dissolved, but the bag's intact. Kimmerle's team hoists it out of the grave. She unzips it. There's a full skeleton inside. Kimmerle nods: It's her cold-case homicide victim, and the bones are in excellent shape.

Positive and bubbly

Still, Kimmerle doesn't make any predictions. "This is a long process," she says. Her plan: "throwing science" at the case. She'll use state-of-the-art DNA testing. Then, a chemical isotope test - her University of South Florida lab is one of a handful nationwide to use this study to narrow down where a person is from or has visited



TAMPA: In this Oct 21, 2016 photo, Dr Erin Kimmerle, standing next to forensic sculptures of unidentified murder victims, speaks to a group of detectives, researchers, and prosecutors during a forensics conference. — AP

through tooth, hair and nail analysis. She can work on this case thanks to a \$385,000 National Institute of Justice grant to review 50 unsolved and unidentified-person deaths, most in Florida.

A week after the skeleton's exhumation in Tampa, the bones are at the medical examiner's office. Kimmerle walks in and slips on a lab coat. "Happy birthday!" she beams at an examiner. When Kimmerle investigated graves at Florida's Dozier School for Boys, where former students accused officials of abuse, she received lots of media attention. She's positive and bubbly, with a high-pitched voice - unexpected from someone who jumps in graves and scrubs bones with a toothbrush. That's exactly what she does this day: polishes bones.

Most of the skeleton is still in the brown bag, mixed with mud, twigs and leaves. "The bones are typically the color of the soil," she says, dipping a femur into sudsy water. The plan is to clean and assemble the skeleton. Kimmerle uses cooking strainers to inspect every fragment. Already, Kimmerle sees promise. Some teeth are nicely preserved, with a wealth of DNA and isotope information. Some molars are missing, and the woman had untreated cavities. Perhaps she lacked money for dental care, Kimmerle muses.

"Teeth tell us a story about a person's station in life," she says. "Now we're going to try to put together that story." Days later, at Kimmerle's lab, the bones lay on a table. The skull has feminine features, and the chest tiny clavicles, mean-

ing the woman was small in stature. Kimmerle will take X-rays, snap photos and laser-scan the skull. She'll use a saw to take a femur sample, and she'll scrape a molar's surface. Those shards are for the isotope analysis.

Determined

While Kimmerle waits for the tests to return - it can take eight months or more - she orders a 3D printed cast of the skull. Forensic sculptors use the skeletal anatomy of the face and details such as race and ethnicity to create busts for these kinds of cases - working with clay to make the dead come alive. From the skull's bone structure and earlier autopsy reports, Kimmerle has determined the woman was African-American.

A forensic-imaging consultant smooths the bust's jaw and brushes the cheekbones. Soon she'll create hair out of clay. "You can really see that it was someone who was alive," the consultant, Tatiana der Parthogh, says. Now, isotope results based on diet and water have returned. Kimmerle's conclusion: The woman was local to the Tampa area. TV crews following her, Kimmerle heads to a podium at the Tampa Bay History Center. Detectives, researchers and prosecutors are gathered for The Art of Forensics. Kimmerle helped organize it and brought busts - including that of the Tampa woman.

In the event brochure, she's Case 5: "The remains are believed to be those of a young black female, approximately 5'2" to 5'9" tall. She was found nude and her death was ruled a homicide." Kimmerle tells the crowd: "There is a reason there is no statute of limitations on murder. Stripping someone of their life is the ultimate crime. The years may pass, but it's not a pass to get away with murder."

Kimmerle finishes; other speeches begin. But there's a commotion near the bust. Two women stand before Case 5. They'd seen a TV clip about the event and showed up; their sister's been missing for decades.

CLINIC
PAGE

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

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

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (09/03/2017 TO 15/03/2017)

SHARQIA-1

LOGAN 11:45 AM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 2:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 4:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 5:45 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 7:15 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 8:45 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 10:15 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:15 AM

SHARQIA-2

HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 12:15 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 1:45 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 4:15 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 6:45 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 9:15 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:45 PM

SHARQIA-3

LOGAN 1:30 PM
 LOGAN 4:15 PM
 LOGAN 7:00 PM
 LOGAN 9:45 PM
 LOGAN 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-1

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 1:30 PM
 FRI
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 3:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 5:30 PM
 BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 7:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 10:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:30 PM

MUHALAB-2

LOGAN 1:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 2:15 PM
 LOGAN 3:45 PM
 LOGAN 6:30 PM
 LOGAN 9:15 PM
 LOGAN 12:05 AM

MUHALAB-3

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 2:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 5:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 7:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 10:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:30 AM

FANAR-1

HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 11:30 AM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 1:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 2:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 4:00 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 5:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 7:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 9:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 10:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 12:05 AM

FANAR-2

THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 12:45 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 3:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 5:00 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 7:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 9:00 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 10:45 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 12:45 AM

FANAR-3

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 1:00 PM
 NO FRI+SAT
 KIKORIKI 1:45 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 3:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 6:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 8:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:00 PM

FANAR-4

LOGAN 12:30 PM
 LOGAN 3:15 PM
 LOGAN 6:00 PM
 LOGAN 8:45 PM
 LOGAN 11:30 PM

MARINA-1

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:45 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 1:30 PM
 LOGAN 3:15 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 6:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 7:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 9:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:30 PM

MARINA-2

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 2:45 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 5:15 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 7:45 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 10:15 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:45 AM

MARINA-3

LOGAN 1:15 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 2:30 PM
 FRI
 LOGAN 4:00 PM
 LOGAN 6:45 PM
 LOGAN 9:30 PM
 LOGAN 12:15 AM

AVENUES-1

KIKORIKI 1:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 1:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 3:00 PM
 KIKORIKI 5:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 7:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 9:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 11:00 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 1:00 AM

AVENUES-2

KONG: SKULL ISLAND-3D-4DX 1:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND-3D-4DX 4:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND-3D-4DX 6:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND-3D-4DX 9:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND-3D-4DX 11:30 PM

AVENUES-3

THE HOLLOW POINT 11:30 AM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 1:30 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 3:45 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 6:00 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 8:15 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 10:30 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 12:45 AM

360°-1

LOGAN 12:30 PM
 LOGAN 3:15 PM
 LOGAN 6:00 PM
 LOGAN 8:45 PM
 LOGAN 11:30 PM

360°-2

HIDDEN FIGURES 12:15 PM
 HIDDEN FIGURES 3:00 PM
 HIDDEN FIGURES 5:45 PM
 HIDDEN FIGURES 8:30 PM
 HIDDEN FIGURES 11:15 PM

360°-3

HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 11:45 AM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 1:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 4:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 6:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 9:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:30 PM

AL-KOUT.1

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:30 AM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 2:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 4:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 7:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 9:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.2

HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 12:15 PM
 LOGAN 2:00 PM

LOGAN 4:45 PM
 LOGAN 7:30 PM
 LOGAN 10:15 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 1:00 AM

AL-KOUT.3

THE HOLLOW POINT 12:30 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 2:30 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 4:30 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 6:30 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 8:45 PM
 THE DEVIL'S DOLLS 10:45 PM
 THE HOLLOW POINT 12:45 AM

AL-KOUT.4

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:45 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 3:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 5:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 6:45 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 8:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 10:00 PM
 LOGAN 11:30 PM

BAIRAQ-1

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 1:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND -3D 4:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 6:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND -3D 9:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 11:30 PM

BAIRAQ-2

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 3:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 4:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 6:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 7:30 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 9:15 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 10:45 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 12:30 AM

BAIRAQ-3

LOGAN 1:15 PM
 KIKORIKI 2:15 PM
 LOGAN 4:00 PM
 BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 6:45 PM
 LOGAN 9:30 PM
 LOGAN 12:15 AM

PLAZA

ANGAMALY DIARIES- Malayalam 4:00 PM
 FRI
 BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 4:00 PM
 NO FRI
 ANGAMALY DIARIES- Malayalam 6:45 PM
 BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 9:30 PM

LAILA

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 4:00 PM
 HAMAH - Kuwaiti Film 6:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 8:00 PM
 LOGAN 10:30 PM

AJIAL.1

BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 4:15 PM
 BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 7:00 PM
 BADRINATH KI DULHANIA-Hindi 9:45 PM

AJIAL.2

MUNTHIRIVALLIKAL THALIRKUMBOL -Malayalam 3:30 PM
 MUNTHIRIVALLIKAL THALIRKUMBOL -Malayalam 6:30 PM
 MUNTHIRIVALLIKAL THALIRKUMBOL -Malayalam 9:30 PM

AJIAL.3

KONG: SKULL ISLAND 5:00 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 7:30 PM
 KONG: SKULL ISLAND 10:00 PM

AJIAL.4

ANGAMALY DIARIES- Malayalam 4:15 PM
 ANGAMALY DIARIES- Malayalam 7:00 PM
 ANGAMALY DIARIES- Malayalam 9:45 PM

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CHANGE OF NAME

I **Lalusabgari** Shaik Shavali S/o Lalusabgari Allabakash holder of Indian Passport No. L0032343 and Civil ID No. 269101009241 has changed my name to Shaik Shafi S/o Shaik Mahaboob Basha. Hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. I will known by name of Shaik Shafi. (C 5281)

I **Murtuza** S/o Asger Khanji holder of Indian Passport No. M6718923 and civil ID No. 290061101911 has changed my name to Murtaza Asger Khanji hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Murtaza Asger Khanji. (C 5282)

I **Husain** S/o Asger Khanji hold-

er of Indian Passport N8636914 and Civil ID No. 292083101241 has change my name to Husain Asger Khanji hereinafter to all my dealings and documents. I will known by name Husain Asger Khanji. (C 5282) 8-3-2017

The public is hereby notified that MS. MARIBINI TALUNGO MOSANIP has filed with the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, State of Kuwait, a Migrant Petition for Change of First Name of her daughter in the Report of Birth filed with the Embassy on 12 May 2016 under Registry Number KT-ROB-475-2016. The First Name of child should read as ELAIZAH instead of ALYAM. Any person having knowledge and/or claiming interest or may be adversely affected by said Petition, file his written opposition with the Embassy within ten (10) working days. (C 5279)

I **Mohammad** Nazir Ibrahim Babjani, holder of Passport No. G4376198 & Civil ID No. 274021705032, has changed my name to Mohammad Nazir Ibrahim Babjan Shaikh, hereafter in all my dealings and documents will be known by name of Mohammad Nazir Ibrahim Babjan Shaikh. (C 5280) 7-3-2017

EMERGENCY

112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 04:47
Shorook 06:05
Duhr: 11:59
Asr: 15:21
Maghrib: 17:52
Isha: 19:09



Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017

RECESSION-HIT NIGERIA DETAILS RECOVERY PLAN

Page 38

Page 41



In Montreal, mushrooms make the local economy go round



DOHA: This file photo taken on March 24, 2015 shows a worker of QDVC (Qatari Diar/VINCI Construction Grands Projets), the Qatari branch of French construction giant Vinci, walking at the construction site of a new metro line in the capital Doha. — AFP Photos

METRO AIMS TO BREAK NEW GROUND IN QATAR

DOUBTS REMAIN WHETHER CAR-MAD QATARIS WILL ACTUALLY USE IT

DOHA: Qatar's metro, once completed, will run hundreds of kilometres across ultra-modern Doha, along the coast and into its expanding suburbs. But whether car-mad Qataris will actually use it remains an open question.

Driverless three-car trains are to serve 100 stations, easing into gleaming newly-built destinations with names such as Ras Bu Fontas, Al-Shaqab and Legtaifiya.

Now the main task for those behind the approximately \$18-billion project—in a country where car is king—is to ensure it draws enough passengers to justify the huge outlay. "We are not a culture that is used to the metro, not like Europe," said Khaled Al-Thani, a civil engineer with Qatar Rail, the state-owned company responsible for the metro.

"This is all new for us." The Doha Metro is a massive venture even by the standards of the energy-rich Gulf desert emirate where infrastructure mega-projects are commonplace. Officials at Qatar Rail are cagey about terming it the world's biggest ongoing engineering project, preferring to call it one of the largest.

Since ground was broken in the summer of 2013, a workforce of 41,000 has been digging, tunnelling and building. Large tracts of land in Doha have been set aside for a network of tunnels and stations.

Tunnel boring world record

Qatar even set a world record for using 21

tunnel boring machines at the same time in November 2015, the highest number ever recorded. Ninety percent of the metro will run underground when operational. The station designs have been approved by the emir himself, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

Qatar Rail says its target is to have completed 70 percent of the network by the end of 2017, with the opening due in late 2019 or early 2020. "With metros in other developed countries, when they develop a metro they introduce a new line, but for us in Qatar, we're introducing a whole network system," said Khaled Al-Thani. Probably the most symbolic part of the Doha Metro will be a station around 20 kilometres north of the capital.

Lusail, the final stop on the Red Line, will serve the \$45-billion city emerging from the desert that will be the venue of football's 2022 World Cup final. "We are actualizing a vision," said Abdulla Abdul Aziz Al-Subai, managing director of Qatar Rail.

Gridlocked Doha

The company has begun holding special classes for Doha residents to make them aware of the metro and to encourage them to use it. "I'm very confident that the metro will be a hit," said Thani on an upbeat note. "It takes me approximately one hour every day to go to work. So, with the metro you have a safe and dependable transportation to reach

from point A to point B." The target is to remove 190,000 cars a day off Doha's heavily congested roads. A report from the Qatar Mobility Innovations Centre (QMIC) found that commuters spent an average of 109 hours in traffic on the country's roads in 2016.

That was an increase of seven hours over the previous year and equivalent to around \$1.5 billion in losses for the Qatari economy, according to QMIC calculations. Many ques-

tion whether Qataris will swap their beloved cars for public transport, and say foreign workers—as in Dubai—are more likely to fill the carriages. The country's population could rise to 3.6 million by 2031, from 2.6 million today, and Qatar Rail wants 1.65 million people at year to be using the metro by that time. "To change this culture, it will take time," said Abdulla Alsayed Zahran, a manager with Qatar Rail. — AFP



DOHA: Qatar's metro, once completed, will run hundreds of kilometres across ultra-modern Doha, along the coast and into its expanding suburbs. But whether car-mad Qataris will actually use it remains an open question.

MERKEL ALLY: PROTECTIONISM WOULD HURT US CONSUMERS

BERLIN: It is as hard to imagine how the US government could force American consumers to stop buying German cars as it is to conceive of the German government persuading Germans to buy US-made cars, a key ally of Chancellor Angela Merkel said.

Juergen Hardt, the German government's coordinator for transatlantic policies, said in an interview with Reuters that it was not possible for the government to try to intervene to reduce Germany's trade surpluses and that economies perform better thanks to competition - rather than isolation.

"I don't see any possibility of artificially reducing German trade surpluses," said Hardt, the foreign policy expert in parliament for Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats ahead of Merkel's trip to meet US President Donald Trump on Tuesday.

"Do we really want to try to force German citizens to buy American cars?" Hardt added. "Does the American president want to force Americans to stop buying German cars in the future? Do we want to artificially make German cars more expensive with taxes so that consumers buy more foreign products?" The United States is Germany's biggest single export destination and US President Donald Trump has warned that his administration will impose a border tax of 35 percent on cars that German carmaker BMW BMWG.DE plans to build at a new plant in Mexico and export to the US.

Germany's trade surplus climbed to a record high in 2016, rising to 252.9 billion euros (\$270.05 billion), surpassing the previous high of 244.3 billion euros in 2015. Dismissing criticism from Trump administration trade adviser Peter Navarro that Germany was exploiting a weak euro to gain a trade advantage, Hardt said the quality of German exports was the key to their success, not exchange rates.

As well as being foreign policy spokesman for Merkel's conservative Christian Democratic Union, Hardt is also Germany's senior parliamentarian on transatlantic relations and knows the direction of German government thinking. Navarro, head of Trump's new National Trade Council, had accused Germany of using a "grossly undervalued" euro to gain a competitive advantage.

Navarro said on Monday the \$65 billion US trade deficit with Germany was "one of the most difficult" trade issues, and bilateral discussions were needed to reduce it outside of European Union restrictions. On Monday he depicted chronic trade deficits as a threat to national security and said the Trump administration would seek to "reclaim" parts supply chains that had moved overseas. — Reuters

NORWAY'S WEALTH FUND MAY BLACKLIST FIRMS OVER EMISSIONS

LYSAKER, Norway: The ethics watchdog for Norway's \$900-billion sovereign wealth fund will recommend this year that the fund exclude or put on a watch list several firms in the oil, cement and steel industries for emitting too much greenhouse gas. Carbon emissions are a new criteria for the fund, which was built up from the proceeds of Norway's own large oil industry and operates under ethical guidelines set by parliament. The world's largest sovereign wealth fund, it has shares in 9,000 companies, 1.3 percent of the entire world's listed equity, giving the decisions it takes to drop or reinstate shareholdings or warn firms considerable weight among investors. The chairman of the fund's independent Council on Ethics, Johan H. Andresen, acknowledged in an interview what he called the "duality" of a fund based on oil divesting over emissions, but said his job was to execute rather than set a mandate.

The fund may also exclude several firms in the defence, telecommunications and arms industries this year over the risk of corruption, he said. The council's recommendations go to the board of the central bank, which usually follows its advice.

Speaking in an interview ahead of publication of the council's annual report on Thursday, Andresen said it was already working on the first recommendation over emissions, expected to come by July.

"It will be a company either in the oil or concrete industry ... We have to start with the worst and make our way through the industries," he said, adding that there would be a "small handful" of recommendations to the board in 2017. The 55-year-old Norwegian, who also owns private investment vehicle Ferd, said the ethics panel would open a probe into the risk of corruption in the pharmaceuticals sector and investigate possible human rights abuses among firms recruiting staff for work in the Gulf States - including a "well known Western" firm. — Reuters



JILIN: Chinese people stand outside a closed Lotte store in Jilin, northeast China's Jilin province yesterday. The store was closed yesterday with announcements on the doors saying that fire safety issues needed to be rectified. — AFP

RECESSION-HIT NIGERIA DETAILS RECOVERY PLAN

LAGOS: Nigeria's government this week launched a master plan to lift it out of recession, hoping to hit 7.0 percent growth by 2020, but economists believe the program sets the bar too high.

The detailed plan was published on Monday and outlines how the west African oil giant thinks it can turn around its worst economic crisis in 25 years. "One of the key goals of the document was probably to get the World Bank and African Development Bank on board with lending Nigeria some more money, since both of them have made a detailed plan a precondition of further borrowing," said John Ashbourne, an Africa economist at the consultancy Capital Economics. Nigeria's ministry of budget and national planning gave a sober assessment of the current situation in the 140-page document, entitled "Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017-2020".

Global crude prices have fallen, slashing revenue coming into Nigeria's oil-dependent economy, weakening the naira and causing inflation to soar to levels approaching 20 percent. At the same time militant attacks in the country's oil-rich south have hit production. "The current administration recognizes that the economy is likely to remain on a path of steady and steep decline if nothing is done to change the trajectory," the master plan warns in an unusually candid assessment of Nigeria's fortunes.

Higher growth

The recovery plan aims to diversify the economy using key sectors such as agriculture and energy, while at the same time increasing crude production to 2.5 million barrels a day (bpd). Currently production is at 1.9 million bpd. The government, which has launched major infrastructure projects to develop the transport network across the country, plans to sell off or reduce its stake in certain state assets. The goal is to increase gross domestic product by an average of 4.62 percent between now and 2020, when growth is forecast to be at 7.0 percent. Such figures are way above current levels: last year, the economy shrank by 1.5 percent. Razia Khan, chief Africa economist at Standard Chartered Bank, described the overall plan as "positive" and "encouraging". "The key here is how it's going to be implemented and how quickly it's going to be implemented," she added.

Monetary policy

As part of the recovery plan, a delivery unit will be set up with the sole task of supervising the implementation and government ministers will be given clear objectives. Monetary policy is a key area, given that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has been heavily criticised for doing little to turn around the flagging economy.

"The CBN is in the process of improving the implementation of its current policies, aimed at achieving a market-determined exchange rate regime to build confidence and encourage foreign exchange inflows," the document says. Such a statement is a U-turn for the bank, which has been accused of stifling investment by enforcing

unpopular currency controls that have resulted in a foreign exchange shortage. Backed by President Muhammadu Buhari, the bank has refused any devaluation and kept the currency at an artificial level - the official rate is 315 naira to \$1 - even as dollar scarcity has caused the naira to hit 520 on the black market. Last month, the central bank gave some relief by making available billions of dollars from the country's reserves. But the one-off measure did nothing to fix the problem in the long term.

Exchange rates

Even though economists welcomed the apparent change of direction, they remained sceptical about the introduction of a flexible exchange rate. How that would be implemented is not set out. "The key reform, many observers would agree, is foreign exchange because this has been the one bottleneck holding back a lot of activity," said Standard Chartered's Khan. "And until we have more clarity on how that issue is going to be dealt with, it's very difficult to determine what kind of a growth path we'll see in Nigeria as a result of all of this." Capital Economics' Ashbourne said the plan gives the impression that "there will be no change", as the document indicates the government is counting on a provisional figure of 305 naira to the dollar until 2020. — AFP

COUNTRYWIDE PROFIT FALLS; TAX HIKE HITS DEMAND

LONDON: Countrywide Plc's profit more than halved in 2016 as the largest estate agency by revenue in Britain saw a slump in demand due to higher property tax and the country's vote to leave the European Union last year. Shares in the company fell 13 percent to a record low of 162.75 pence in morning trade in London. Countrywide's pretax profit fell 59 percent to 19.5 million pounds (\$23.7 million) from a year earlier. The company had forecast income for the full year to be broadly flat at 737 million pounds, after issuing two warnings on results since July. Total income for 2016 rose 0.4 percent to 737 million pounds.

Countrywide warned in January that the volume of house sales in London in the final quarter continued to be below 2015 levels, resulting in a 6 percent drop in the number of deals for the year. The sales market volatility is likely to continue in 2017, it said. Countrywide also expects headwinds from tenants' fees regulation and pressured landlord environment in 2017. Britain has said it would ban one-off tenant fees to try to bring down the cost of renting and cool the market already hit by a property tax increase in April on houses bought by buy-to-let landlords. — Reuters

ECB TO SIT TIGHT AHEAD OF HIGH-RISK ELECTIONS

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is set to keep monetary policy firmly on hold as it casts a nervous eye towards high-risk elections in France and the Netherlands during an upsurge in populist sentiment that threatens to derail the recovery. Although economic growth and inflation are both picking up, the ECB is expected to resist growing calls to pave the way for a policy tightening, pointing to political risks, weak underlying price growth and a still fragile recovery nearly a decade after the bloc's economic woes began.

For once, the outlook is improving. Economic sentiment is at a six-year high, trade is rebounding, services and manufacturing output are rising, and unemployment is at its lowest since 2009, suggesting the economy is in its best shape in all that time. Even inflation, the ECB's key objective, has rebounded, essentially hitting the bank's target last month.

"The fast improvement in economic data and an

energy-driven jump in inflation to 2 percent are probably enough for ECB President (Mario) Draghi to consider throwing a bone to the hawks of the Governing Council and start sounding less dovish," UniCredit economist Marco Valli said.

Indeed, German banking association BdB and the Ifo economic institute both called on the ECB on Thursday to start preparing the ground for the end of ultra-easy monetary policy, adding to a list of powerful names that also includes German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble, demanding an ECB retreat. Speaking just as rate setters met, Schaeuble also called for a "timely" exit from ECB stimulus, a relatively strong line from a politician though a notch softer than comments he has previously made, blaming low ECB rates for the rise of the populist right in Germany.

For Draghi, it will be walking a tightrope. While acknowledging the positive economic developments, he is likely to keep arguing that the inflation

surge is temporary, growth is fragile, and the outlook is clouded with risks.

These include—within weeks—the Dutch and French elections and the first meeting of G20 finance leaders since US President Donald Trump took office. Economists in a Reuters poll said the ECB's next move will be either a tweak of its guidance in the second half of this year or a gradual reduction in its asset-buying program next year.

"An important reason for not taking any hasty action is the ECB's own track record of jumping the gun," ING economist Carsten Brzeski said. "In 2007/8 and 2011, the ECB hiked rates, the first based on German wage increases and the second when the worst of the euro zone debt crisis seemed to be over. Both times, the ECB was taught a lesson. It seems unlikely that the ECB would want to jump the gun for a third time, particularly not on the eve of two important elections in the eurozone." — Reuters



Chinese customers buy vegetables at a market in Lianyungang, east China's Jiangsu province yesterday. Prices for goods at the factory gate in China rose for the sixth straight month in February, officials said. —AFP

CHINA FEB NEW LOANS EASE TO 1.17TN YUAN

BEIJING: China's new loans fell sharply in February from near-record levels the previous month but were still higher than expected, highlighting the difficulties facing the government as it struggles to get rising debt under control. Under its new "prudent and neutral" policy, the People's Bank of China (PBOC) has adopted a modest tightening bias in a bid to cool explosive growth in debt, though it is treading cautiously to avoid hurting economic growth. China's banks made more than expected 1.17 trillion yuan (\$169.32 billion) in new loans in February, down from 2.03 trillion yuan in January - the second highest ever. Analysts polled by Reuters had predicted new February yuan loans of 920 billion yuan.

Chinese banks usually "front load" loans early in the year after the government renews their credit quotas, competing fiercely to maintain market share and to lock in higher-quality borrowers as soon as possible. Broad M2 money supply (M2) in February grew 11.1 percent from a year earlier, central bank data showed yesterday, missing forecasts for 11.4 percent growth. Outstanding yuan loans grew at 13 percent by month-end on an annual basis, higher than an expected 12.7 percent rise. China's foreign-exchange deposits were at \$752.6 billion at the end of February, compared with \$726.4 billion a month earlier, the central bank said.

Reining in risks

For 2017, China has cut its target for broad money supply growth to around 12 percent from about 13 percent for 2016, signaling a bid to rein in debt risks while keeping growth on track, according to the government work report made at Sunday's opening of the annual meeting of parliament. The trimmed M2 target reinforces views that Beijing has shifted its stance to a modest tightening bias under "prudent and neutral" monetary policy, aiming to cool credit expansion. The PBOC raised short-term interest rates modestly in January and February and is expected to do so again in coming months, but is seen keeping its benchmark policy lending rate steady through at least mid-2018, according to a Reuters poll separate from the one on loan and money supply growth. — Reuters

FRENCH-SWISS FIRM LAFARGE READY TO SELL CEMENT FOR TRUMP'S WALL

COMPANY OFFERS TO HELP US INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: CEO

NEW YORK: French-Swiss group LafargeHolcim is ready to sell its cement to build US President Donald Trump's controversial border wall, the company's CEO said in an interview.

The wall Trump promised to erect along the US-Mexico border, valued at tens of billions of dollars, is at the center of a diplomatic crisis between Mexico City and Washington and is provoking criticism around the world. "We are prepared to supply our materials to all types of infrastructure projects in the United States," LafargeHolcim chief Eric Olsen said.

"We are the leader in cement, so we supply all our customers," he said. "We are here to support the building and development of the United States."

Asked about possible consequences for the company's reputation, Olsen stressed that LafargeHolcim is not a political entity. "We are here to supply our customers' needs," he said. "We don't have a political view on things."

He refused to comment on a possible victory for the extreme right-wing candidate Marine Le Pen in the French presidential election, a prospect increasingly worrying international business and financial circles.

Olsen also declined to comment on the indirect financing by Lafarge in 2013 and 2014 of armed groups in Syria, a country torn by civil war, to keep one of its cement plants active. French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault called yesterday on the company to "think carefully" before supplying material to build the Mexico wall, insisting it had social and environmental accountability. He also noted the Syria issue.

Ayrault said Lafarge "should think about its own interests, as there are other clients around the world who are going to view this with a degree of surprise."

Boycott risk?

While this apolitical stance risks causing the firm bad publicity, especially in Europe, the material impact on sales likely would be negligible because LafargeHolcim does not sell cement

directly to ordinary consumers. The company is therefore shielded from a potential boycott like the one targeting Uber, which was criticized for its slow reaction to the first travel ban by the Trump administration, blocking travelers from several Muslim-majority countries. Thousands of customers deleted the app from their phones.

In contrast to LafargeHolcim, Irish cement manufacturer CRH, also with a presence in the US market, already announced it will not supply its materials for the border wall.

US jobs

The stakes are high for LafargeHolcim, a group created in 2015 by the merger of French cement manufacturer Lafarge and its Swiss counterpart Holcim.

The company hopes to be one of the big winners of the \$1 trillion infrastructure investment program Trump has promised to renovate bridges, tunnels, roads and airports.

Olsen noted "there is going to be a significant increase in infrastructure spending," although the benefits are not likely to be felt this year "because it takes time for these infrastructure projects to get going." But "it will partially affect our business in 2018 and certainly in 2019, 2020 and 2021."

The company is "very well positioned to serve that demand," he said. The cement maker, which returned to profitability last year after losses in 2015, is expected to announce the creation of new US jobs in the coming weeks, a topic central to Trump's agenda.

"I don't have a specific number," Olsen said, but "we will be creating jobs." Another element that could appeal to Trump, who has been hammering for weeks on his strategy of giving priority to US employees, merchandise and companies: LafargeHolcim has production sites in Texas and operations in New Mexico and Arizona, three of the four US states bordering Mexico. — AFP

DIGITAL PUBLISHING PAYS OFF FOR AXEL SPRINGER

BERLIN: German media group Axel Springer said yesterday its digital publishing empire would bring further increases in sales and profits in 2017, after meeting its forecasts last year.

The publisher achieved a net profit of 450 million euros (\$474 million) in 2016, up almost 50 percent on the previous year's figure. Operating, or underlying, profit increased 6.5 percent to 595 million euros, on revenues around the same level as in 2015 at 3.3 billion.

Axel Springer had lowered its own forecasts in October, blaming the financial effects of a joint venture with Switzerland's Ringier to bring the two groups' publications under one roof.

"Thanks to targeted investments in digital business models and complementary acquisitions, the group has consolidated its position as Europe's

leading digital publisher," Springer said in a statement. The Berlin-based group was among the first German publishers to make big bets on digital media, offering online subscriptions to tabloid Bild and conservative broadsheet Die Welt.

It has also sold off a number of print titles and made big investments in digital-only publications such as Business Insider. Digital offerings now account for 67 percent of revenue and 72 percent of profit at the publisher, founded just after the Second World War by journalist Axel Springer and a landmark in German public life. For the current year, Springer expects its digital products to grow further, forecasting revenues around 5.0 percent higher than 2016 and operating profits increased by up to 10 percent. — AFP

BREXIT RESHAPING BRITAIN'S HOUSE-BUILDING INDUSTRY

BUILDERS TURN TO BOLT-TOGETHER HOMES

LONDON: The prospect of Brexit choking off the supply of EU workers is reshaping Britain's homebuilding industry, with big companies increasingly looking to factory-manufacture houses in sections that can be slotted together on-site with minimal labor.

Many of Britain's leading housebuilders, including Berkeley, Taylor Wimpey, Persimmon and Your Housing, told Reuters they were either planning new developments of prefabricated homes or considering doing so. This represents something of a turnaround in a country where "prefabs" have borne a strong and lingering stigma dating back to the 1940s when Winston Churchill ordered tens of thousands of cheap, flimsy, ugly units to be built to address a shortage housing after World War Two.

The change is being fuelled by fears over a labor shortage in the British construction industry, which relies heavily on European workers like carpenters, joiners and bricklayers. About 12 percent of its 2.1 million employees come from abroad, mainly the EU, according to official figures. The trend is amplified in London where a quarter of the 350,000 construction employees come from other EU countries, particularly eastern Europe. Britain leaving the European Union, with its single market and free movement of workers, threatens the flow of this crucial skilled labor at a time when the country faces another housing shortage and is looking to build 1 million homes by 2020.

This is driving a resurgence in so-called offsite construction which allows anything from bathroom pods and chimneys to entire houses to be manufactured in factories before being transported by trucks to the site and bolted together. While this involves a bigger initial investment, it requires a fraction of the labor of traditional construction, which relies on armies of workers to build houses layer by layer from the ground

up. The imperative to avoid delays from labor shortages can dramatically push up payroll costs.

"Fundamentally, the construction industry has been doing some things the same way for hundreds of years. Historically, we had the labor ... But the challenge is different now," said Berkeley Chairman Tony Pidgley.

Big players

Berkeley is producing its first ever factory-built homes this year. It is starting small, with 16 prefabs in southeast London, but has another 50 in the pipeline for the capital and plans to gradually expand the program. The company said it had a target of building 10-15 percent of all its houses using modular construction in the "short to medium term", without giving a more specific timeframe. It added that factory work could be carried out by fewer, and relatively unskilled, workers as most processes were automated.

Your Housing, which has a greater focus on social housing, is taking a different approach and partnering with Chinese companies to undertake a far bigger project. It said it was finalizing an agreement with China National Building Material and WeLink for a 2.5 billion pound (\$3.1 billion) joint venture to build six prefab factories in Britain, one a year to 2022, with the aim of producing thousands of homes. Your Housing executive director Stephen Haigh said Britain's EU withdrawal would challenge traditional building by squeezing labor, allowing factory-based construction to flourish.

Mark Farmer, author of a government-commissioned review into the construction sector labor market late last year, said the Brexit vote was forcing companies to look at offsite building techniques, to reduce dependence on traditional labor. "I'm not talking about a few thousand units, I'm talking about

investors and developers that control the development of tens of thousands of units," Farmer, who runs the Cast real estate and construction consultancy, told Reuters.

Prefab tech

Britain lags other nations in the adoption of factory-based construction, which accounted for 7 percent of UK housebuilding by value in 2015 versus up to 15 percent in Germany and Japan, according to data from engineering consultancy Arcadis. Today's technology is light years ahead of the low-grade 1940s prefabs, however, and prefabrication can produce homes of the same quality as traditional building techniques, drawing the interest of big construction players ahead of Brexit.

Taylor Wimpey is exploring ways to "future proof" its business and considering offsite construction options ranging from modular house sections to prefab timber frames, said divisional managing director John Gainham. "Mindful of skill shortages, which is a big issue within the industry, and the implications of Brexit potentially, we've started to look at all the mainstream alternatives," he said.

Its rival Persimmon has for many years had a factory in central England, part of a business called Space4, that makes prefab timber frames for about 40 percent of all its houses.

Space4 is looking at proposals to either increase volumes at the existing factory or build another factory elsewhere in Britain, said Persimmon Homes Midlands chief Richard Oldroyd, adding this was being driven by a desire to reduce reliance on traditional labour like bricklayers, partly in light of Brexit.

It is also testing the construction of factory-based attic, or loft, rooms as well as various finishes for houses to further shift construction offsite, he added. — Reuters

BMW KEEPS FOOT DOWN FOR 2017 AFTER RECORD YEAR

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German luxury carmaker BMW said yesterday it had boosted profits in 2016 on the back of record sales, offering an increased dividend and promising further growth this year. Net profit grew 8.0 percent over 2015's figure to reach 6.9 billion euros (\$7.3 billion), the group said in a statement, as revenues grew a more modest 2.2 percent to reach 94.1 billion—both new records for BMW.

Operating, or underlying profit fell by 2.2 percent to 9.4 billion euros. Looking ahead to the current year, "we are again targeting a new sales volume record in 2017, with sales slightly up on the previous year," chief executive Harald Krueger said. But "the BMW Group expects the global political and economic environment to remain volatile," as Brexit and potential trade restrictions in the United States loom on the horizon. BMW was attacked by Donald Trump in a January interview before taking office as US president in which he warned the German firm not to go ahead with a planned factory in Mexico or face harsh border taxes.

The Munich-based group, which also owns Mini and Rolls-Royce, sold a total of almost 2.4 million vehicles in 2016. Its new unit sales record wasn't enough to outshine Stuttgart rival Daimler, whose Mercedes-Benz flagship outsold BMW's own-brand cars for the first time in more than a decade last year. BMW plans to offer shareholders a dividend of 3.50 euros per share, up from a 3.20-euro payout for the financial year 2015.

But investors gave the 2016 results a guarded response, sending BMW's shares lower on the Frankfurt stock exchange. Dealers said they worried about a decline in the automaker's EBIT, or profit before financials, a measure of its operating performance.

Group EBIT fell by 2.2 percent in 2016 and by 1.8 percent for the automotive segment alone, outweighing increases in the motorcycles and financial services divisions.

BMW shares were down 2.5 percent around midday at 84.12 euros. — AFP

RETAIL GIANT CARREFOUR STRUGGLES IN CHINA, FRANCE

PARIS: France's biggest retailer Carrefour reported lower profits yesterday as it struggled in China and in its French home market where cut-throat competition weighed on margins. Its 2016 operating performance improved in the rest of Europe and in Latin America, but not enough to prevent net profit from falling 24 percent to 746 million euros (\$785 million).

One-off tax changes were to blame for much of the fall, but stripped of exceptional items net earnings were still down 7.4 percent, the retailer said in a statement. Net profit on ordinary operations fell 3.8 percent, in the ballpark of analyst expectations. In Asia, ongoing operations produced a loss of 58 million euros, compared to a profit of 13 million the previous year, mostly due to weakness in China. Carrefour said it is looking to revamp its business model in that market. Carrefour's performance in its French home market, meanwhile, suffered from weak consumer spending and massive competitive pressures from rivals slashing prices to gain market share. Profit on operations fell 13.4 percent in France.

Investors were disappointed in Carrefour's French performance, giving the results a "lukewarm reception", analysts at Bryan Garnier said in a note.

Carrefour's shares dropped more than four percent to 21.76 euros in early business in Paris. The company's French results translated "a worsening in the competitive environment for French hypers", Bryan Garnier said.

But a dynamic Spanish market and rising margins in Italy and Poland helped the rest of its European businesses stack up a 25.5 percent rise in profits on operations. Latin America also did well overall, weathering an ongoing recession in Brazil, Carrefour said. Despite the year's mixed picture, the retailer said it had emerged from 2016 "a stronger company". It expects to expand this year, both in its store operation and online businesses, it said. — AFP



FAIRFAX: Construction workers are seen as they build an apartment building in Fairfax, Virginia. The US housing market, a key economic driver, is exceedingly tight, with supply struggling to meet demand as the sector recovers a decade after the housing crisis, analysts say. —AFP

AKZO NOBEL REJECTS \$22BN PPG BID, LOOKS TO SPIN OFF CHEMICALS

AMSTERDAM: Dutch paints and coatings maker Akzo Nobel NV rejected a 21 billion euro (\$22 billion) bid from larger US rival PPG Industries Inc yesterday, saying instead it would “unlock value” by spinning off its chemicals business.

PPG’s unsolicited offer, which would be the biggest purchase of a Dutch company by a U.S. buyer according to Thomson Reuters data, comes just days before an election where the vulnerability of the Netherlands’ biggest blue chip companies to foreign takeover has been a concern.

Akzo chief executive Ton Buechner said the maker of Dulux paint was best placed to create value itself and was looking at floating or selling its specialty chemicals arm, which accounts for roughly a third of sales and earnings, with a 2016 operating profit of 629 million euros on sales of 4.8 billion euros. The cash and share offer from PPG was “unsolicited, non-binding and conditional” and worth around 83 euros per share, Akzo said. The bid represented a 29 percent premium to Akzo’s closing price of 64.42 euros on Wednesday and its shares rose 14 percent to 73.49 euros yesterday, nearing all-time highs.

PPG declined to comment on Wednesday about the offer after details of a possible bid first surfaced. Buechner said Akzo’s management and supervisory boards had concluded that the PPG proposal failed “to reflect the long-term value creation potential of the company”.

PPG’s offer was also risky because cost savings were uncertain, it would lead to a highly leveraged company, and it stood a good chance of being blocked by regulators, he added.

However, analysts said there could be merit in a deal. “In our view, Akzo Nobel could in large parts be a good fit for PPG in a fragmented global coatings market,” said Kepler Cheuvreux analyst Christian Faltz in a note.

Faltz said the pair were the two biggest players, with PPG holding 12 percent of the market and Akzo another 9 percent. “One significant overlap would be in automotive refinishing, while all other segments except for decorative paints in Europe would be a good complimentary fit,” he said. — Reuters



MONTREAL: Lysiane Roy Maheu (left) and Dominique Lynch-Gauthier, co-founder of Montreal urban mushroom farming startup Blanc de Gris pose in the warehouse of the company on January 17 in Montreal, Quebec. — AFP

IN MONTREAL, MUSHROOMS MAKE THE LOCAL ECONOMY GO ROUND

BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY BY RECYCLING AND RECOVERING RESOURCES

MONTREAL: While delivering oyster mushrooms to restaurants in the heart of Montreal, Lysiane Roy Maheu stops to get a bucket filled with coffee grounds from a barista friend. She needs it for her next crop. Mixed with residues from local micro-breweries, the grounds will provide rich nutrients for cultivating the sumptuous fungi.

They are grown in pierced plastic buckets stacked two meters (six feet) high in a warehouse located in a former working-class, but now quickly gentrifying, Montreal neighborhood. Three times a week, Roy Maheu and her friend Dominique Lynch-Gauthier, both 35, harvest about 200 kilograms (about 440 pounds) of mushrooms, which are delivered to area restaurants the same day.

This is the so-called circular economy-one that looks to boost productivity by recycling and recovering resources, all while reducing waste and avoiding pollution-at work.

Nothing is wasted

By cultivating mushrooms from recycled resources, “we’ve eliminated waste,” explains Lynch-Gauthier, co-founder of the urban farm specializing in high-quality oyster mushrooms, Blanc de Gris. “Waste is simply a resource that has been put in the wrong place,” she says, citing a founding principle of circular economies.

The pair started the company three years ago, and they sing the praises of recycling as a way to significantly reduce costs, as well as being environmentally sustainable. To make their product, a mushroom culture is mixed with the coffee grounds and brewery dregs recovered from neighborhood watering holes in buckets, rather than in disposable plastic bags used by most other mushroom houses. There is no delivery waste either. Plastic bins used to deliver the mushrooms are returned to the vendor and used over and over.

“Any residue from the crop could be used as compost in vegetable gardens,”

notes Lynch-Gauthier.

Roy Maheu has long worked in the restaurant industry and knows how important it is to personally approach chefs at Montreal’s best restaurants, to put the mushrooms in front of them to examine and taste. “We aim to partner with high-end restaurants that share our values,” she told AFP. One kilo of mushrooms is sold to restaurant owners for

Can\$25 (US\$19), including delivery. Walk-in orders are also sometimes accepted, for Can\$15 per half-kilo.

Despite these arguably steep prices, business is booming. “More and more people are willing to pay a little more for local food” that is associated with ecology or organic farming, explained Rene Audet, a sociologist at the University of Quebec in Montreal. — AFP

BAIDU CEO DEFENDS STATE SUPPORT OF CHINESE FIRMS

BEIJING: State support for private firms is crucial in China’s market, the head of the mainland’s online search giant Baidu said yesterday, following complaints from European businesses that Beijing-backed firms are pushing out foreign competitors. “I think state support of private companies is absolutely necessary. In the Chinese economy, the government yields a very important role... such as to provide data to allow companies to do better research,” chief executive Robin Li said on the sidelines of annual parliament meetings being held this week in Beijing.

“The state does not spend that much money on private companies. We still rely on the market for most of our (financing),” he told reporters. “The Chinese market has its own characteristics; it’s not the same as the US or even France.” Li’s remarks came after the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China on Tuesday released a 70-page critique of the government’s “Made in China 2025” plan-launched two years ago-to champion local high-tech manufacturing. While upgrading manufacturing methods and developing high-tech industries is important for China’s economic transition, state intervention can stoke tensions with trade partners and lead to industrial overcapacity, the Chamber’s report said.

Current state subsidies also give an unfair advantage to local producers and may possibly violate China’s commitments as a member of the World Trade Organisation, it added. Beijing has said it wants to reorient China’s economy away from relying on debt-fueled investment and towards a consumption and innovation-driven model, but the transition has proved challenging. The economy grew 6.7 percent last year-the slowest rate in a quarter of a century.

Li is among more than 100 billionaire delegates of China’s rubber-stamp parliament, the National People’s Congress (NPC), which convenes annually in Beijing. On Sunday, at the opening of the NPC, the government released statements appearing to address international concerns over the “Made in China” plan. “Foreign firms will be treated the same as domestic firms when it comes to licence applications, standard-setting and government procurement, and will enjoy the same preferential policies under the Made in China 2025 initiative,” a government work report said. — AFP

CHINA GIVES GREENLIGHT TO DOZENS OF TRUMP TRADEMARKS

SHANGHAI/WASHINGTON: China has granted preliminary approval for 38 trademarks linked to Donald Trump, documents on China’s state trademark office show, giving the US President and his family protection were they to develop the “Trump” brand in the market. The trademarks - which in theory cover a wide sweep of businesses from hotels to mobile libraries and escorts - underline the complexities and potential concerns over conflicts of interest facing President Trump, who has a sprawling business empire using the Trump name around the world.

Trump, a wealthy real estate developer, has previously said he has handed over his business interests to a trust overseen by one of his sons and a Trump Organization executive. He can, however, revoke the trust at will and, as its sole beneficiary, remains linked to it financially.

The trademarks - mostly variations in English and Chinese on the name “Donald Trump” - were given preliminary approval in two lists published on the Trademark Office of the State Administration for Industry and Commerce on Feb 27 and Monday. Trump’s lawyers applied for the trademarks in April last year, mostly

registered to “Donald J. Trump” and listing to the address of Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue in New York.

Some US law makers have raised questions about whether Trump’s position as President could prompt preferential treatment of his businesses. Trademark lawyers, however, said that the approval process did not seem that unusual. “If they were filed in April last year and just now approved, it’s fairly normal,” said Yong Heng Wu, Shanghai-based counsel for MWE China focused on intellectual property, adding the general timeframe for preliminary approvals was 6-9 months.

“I think the reason why people are paying so much attention to Donald Trump trademarks now is because he became the President of the most powerful country in the world.”

The trademarks cover business areas including branded spas, massage parlours, golf clubs, hotels, insurance, finance and real estate companies, retail shops, restaurants, bars, bodyguards and escort services. Intellectual property lawyers said trademark applications were often very broad to give the applicant the most comprehensive protection for their brand. — AP

PSG 'NIGHTMARE' AS COACH BATTLES FOR SURVIVAL

BARCELONA: PSG coach Unai Emery was fighting for survival yesterday after his side were swept away 6-1 by Barcelona in a Champions League rout described as a "nightmare" and a "humiliation". The Spaniard had been hailed as a tactical genius last month when his French champions stunned mighty Barca 4-0 in Paris in the first leg of their last-16 tie. But on Wednesday night, in front of almost 100,000 people at the Nou Camp, PSG shipped three late goals in an incredible last seven minutes as Barcelona completed the greatest comeback in the history of the tournament, winning 6-5 on aggregate. "When you win 4-0, then lose 6-1, it's very hard to accept," said PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi, the Qatari official whose country has poured millions of dollars into the French club.

"Everyone knows that the quarter-finals were an objective and after winning the first leg 4-0 that aim was confirmed. "This is a nightmare for everybody. Is

Unai Emery still credible? This is not the moment to talk of this. After the game, we are all upset." Influential French sports daily L'Equipe was quick to highlight the implications of becoming the shock European fall guys. "It is the entire PSG project that is threatened by this humiliation," it said. Emery, meanwhile, said PSG were damaged by German referee Deniz Aytekin's decisions to award two penalties to Barcelona-both in the second half.

Unacceptable mistakes

Lionel Messi converted the first penalty on 50 minutes to make it 3-0, before PSG's Edinson Cavani scored what looked like a crucial away goal. But Neymar, after scoring an 88th-minute free kick, tucked away the second penalty in the 91st minute before Sergi Roberto got the vital goal in the fifth minute of injury time. "The truth is we have let a huge opportunity get away and

we are aware of that. In the first half it was more our fault than them playing well," said Spanish coach Emery. "In the second half it changed. The (Messi) penalty got them off to a great start, but I was already calmer because I could see the team was responding better, were better positioned on the pitch and could do damage.

"We had chances to make it 3-2 and then the refereeing decisions, I don't know if they were right or not, but for sure they damaged us. Then in the last two minutes we lost everything we had recovered in the second-half. "Barcelona are capable of this in their stadium. In the last few minutes they played all or nothing and they have beaten us." PSG's Belgian defender Thomas Meunier blasted his team-mates for allowing Barcelona to bully them. "At 5-1 down, we were qualifying but we conceded a goal that we should not have conceded," he said. —AFP

BARCELONA HAILED AS 'LIVING LEGENDS'

BARCELONA: Barcelona were hailed as living legends yesterday after Neymar helped the Spanish giants pull off a Nou Camp miracle with a dying minutes Champions League win over stunned Paris Saint-Germain. The Brazilian forward played the game of his life as Barcelona made up a 0-4 first leg deficit by winning 6-1 in front of nearly 100,000 ecstatic fans at the Camp Nou stadium for an astonishing 6-5 aggregate triumph. "You have become legends," headlined the Barcelona Sport daily while El Munda spoke of the 'miracle of a lifetime.' Neymar presided over a final seven minutes that plunged PSG into a waking nightmare. He scored an 88th-minute free kick and a penalty in the 91st before setting up Sergi Roberto's clincher in the fifth minute of injury time, sealing the 6-1 win.

The result sent the Spanish giants storming into the quarter-finals and left PSG in tatters. "I know that we have made history. A team like this can do anything," Neymar told BeIN Sports. Germany's football bible, Kicker, spoke of a "night of magic" while Bild said simply "Barcelona move mountains..." The French press scrambled to find words harsh enough to describe PSG's shame. "Crushed, trampled on, humiliated," said Le Figaro newspaper while L'Equipe sports daily said "Indescribable." The win recalled Manchester United's injury-time double to win the 1999 title against Bayern Munich in the same stadium, and Liverpool's victory in the 2005 final after being 3-0 down to AC Milan at half-time.

"It is a difficult night to explain with words," said Barca boss Luis Enrique, who will leave the club at the end of the season. "It was a horror movie, not a drama, with a Camp Nou that I have seen very few times as a player or coach. "What defines this victory is the faith that the players and fans had." The defeat raised questions over the future of PSG coach Unai Emery, as club president Nasser Al-Khelaifi ominously called it "very hard to accept". "This is a nightmare for everybody. Is Unai Emery still credible? This is not the moment to talk



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi celebrates their victory at the end of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 second leg football match FC Barcelona vs Paris Saint-Germain FC at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on March 8, 2017. — AFP

of this. After the game, we are all upset," said the Qatari.

And PSG defender Thiago Motta's night went from bad to worse after he hit a supporter with his sportscar after flying back home yesterday. Around 30 supporters were waiting for the players as they emerged from Le Bourget airport outside Paris. In chaotic scenes, Italian international Motta's car accelerated as supporters and photographers obstructed the road. One man banged on the vehicle and was struck by the car. He was taken to hospital but his injuries were minor, police said.

Went to pieces

Emery admitted his team went to pieces in the final minutes, but said they were badly affected by the two second-half penalties given by German referee Deniz Aytekin. "In the second-half it changed. The (Messi) penalty got them off to a great start, but I was already calmer because I could see the team was responding better, were better positioned on the pitch and could do dam-

age," said the Spanish coach. "We had chances to make it 3-2 and then the refereeing decisions, I don't know if they were right or not, but for sure they damaged us. Then in the last two minutes we lost everything we had recovered in the second-half." Despite Luis Suarez's early opener, a Layvin Kurzawa own goal and Lionel Messi's penalty, Barca looked down and out when Edinson Cavani volleyed home what seemed to be the vital away goal for PSG.

However, Neymar restored Barca's belief as he firstly fired home a sensational free-kick two minutes from time and then converted from the penalty spot. And substitute midfielder Roberto became the unlikely hero when he stretched to turn home Neymar's sublime chip over the defence, leaving the score 6-5 on aggregate as the crowd dissolved into ecstasy. "I threw myself at it with everything," Roberto told BeIN Sports. "We left Paris very down and now this is incredible. "We were prepared for all this. The fans were like 10 extra players and in the end this is all for them." — AFP

WENGER WILL WEIGH FANS' FEELINGS OVER HIS FUTURE

LONDON: Arsene Wenger will take into consideration the views of angry Arsenal supporters when he decides whether to remain at the club beyond the end of this season. Wenger endured calls for his resignation before and after Tuesday's humiliating 5-1 defeat against Bayern Munich in the Champions League. The Gunners' heaviest home loss since 1998 ensured their seventh successive last 16 exit from Europe's elite club competition, sparking furious protests from supporters.

It is not the first time Wenger has been subjected to vitriolic abuse in recent years as the Frenchman's failure to build a title-winning team since 2004 continues to frustrate fans. Wenger, who has been in charge at Arsenal for 21 years, is yet to confirm he will accept a reported two-year contract extension and speculation has grown that he will quit when his present deal expires at the end of the season. With Arsenal's Premier League title challenge in tatters, the 67-year-old plans to contemplate his future a while longer and the fans' opinions will play a small role in that decision.

Asked whether he would consider the crowd's displeasure when deciding his future, Wenger said: "Yes - you consider. It is not the most important factor to consider of course. "I don't work for my image, I work for this club. How I look is not really my problem. "I have shown since I have been here, I have shown I love this club and am loyal to this club. "I think I have made the right decisions and respect the values of this club. "I have worked for 20 years to make our fans happy and when we lose games I understand they are not - at certain times you have to accept different opinions."

United

Arsenal winger Theo Walcott had hinted this week that there was some unrest amongst players and staff at the club. Walcott's comments followed on from reports of a training bust-up involving Arsenal forward Alexis Sanchez and his team-mates after the Chilean was surprisingly dropped for last Saturday's defeat at Liverpool. Wenger brushed off talk he has told his players he is leaving soon and insisted his team still has a strong bond. "I think a lot has been said about that is exaggerated," he added. "We have a good united group in terms of the group. "In the past it's not always the team that love each other the most that are the best on the pitch.

"When you go through disappointing results you have disappointment, but the best way to respond is to show how united we are on that front. "It is our job to be competitive and at this club that means being up there always. It's about performing." Amid claims Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain will ask for a transfer in the close-season, Wenger said of the England midfielder: "I hope he stays here. He is a very promising player. "He looks to have the values we want at this club." Wenger had strongly criticised refereeing decisions that went against his side in the Bayern clash and he continued to insist the controversial dismissal of Arsenal defender Laurent Koscielny, for conceding a penalty when the Gunners led 1-0, was the turning point. —AFP

CELTICS BEAT WARRIORS, JAZZ DOWN ROCKETS

OAKLAND: Isaiah Thomas scored 25 points as the Boston Celtics beat Golden State 99-86 on Wednesday night, spoiling the Warriors' lone home game in a nearly three-week span. Splash Brothers Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson combined to shoot just 4 for 17 from 3-point range as Golden State struggled again without injured star Kevin Durant, who spoke before the game wearing a bulky brace on his injured left knee and using crutches. Curry had 23 points, and Thompson 25 as the Warriors' 10-game home winning streak was snapped - nearly a year after Boston ended a 54-game home win streak for the Warriors. Kelly Olynyk added 17 points, five rebounds and five assists for Boston.

JAZZ 115, ROCKETS 108

Rudy Gobert and Gordon Hayward each scored 23 points to help Utah beat Houston for its fourth straight victory. James Harden had 35 points for the Rockets. They dropped their second in a row. The Rockets trailed by double digits for much of the game as they struggled from 3-point range. Houston was just 8 of 32 to end a streak of 18 straight games with at least 10 3-pointers. The Jazz won two of the three meetings, the first time since the 2011-12 season that they've won a season series over the Rockets.

RAPTORS 94, PELICANS 87

Jonas Valanciunas had 25 points and 13 rebounds as Toronto beat a New Orleans squad that played without All-Star forward Anthony Davis during the second half. The Pelicans announced that Davis hurt his left wrist, an injury that appeared to occur when he crashed to the court during the team's possession in the first half. Davis was fouled by Normal Powell as he tried to catch an alley-oop pass. Davis, who shoots right-handed, made two free throws after the foul, but never emerged from the locker room after half-time. The Pelicans said X-rays did not reveal any broken bones, but that Davis, who did not speak to reporters after the game, had a contusion and would be re-evaluated daily. DeMarcus Cousins had 25 points and 10 rebounds for the Pelicans.

TIMBERWOLVES 107, CLIPPERS 91

Karl-Anthony Towns had 29 points and 14 rebounds as Minnesota beat Los Angeles. Andrew Wiggins scored 20 points, and Ricky Rubio had 15 points, 12 assists and six rebounds for the Timberwolves. They were well-rested after having their game against Portland on Monday night postponed because of condensation on the court. DeAndre Jordan had 20 points and 13 rebounds and Blake Griffin scored 16 points for the Clippers. Chris Paul had 10 assists but scored just seven points on 3-for-9 shooting.

SPURS 114, KINGS 104

Manu Ginobili had 19 points while David Lee added 18 points and 10 rebounds as San Antonio rallied without Kawhi Leonard to beat Sacramento. San Antonio won its ninth straight and extended its NBA record for 50-win seasons to 18 straight. Tyreke Evans had a season-high 26 points for Sacramento. The Kings have lost six straight.

BUCKS 104, KNICKS 93

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 22 of his 32 points in the second half to help Milwaukee rally to beat New York. The Bucks extended their winning streak to four games and moved to within a half-game of Chicago for the eighth playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Antetokounmpo also added 13 rebounds, seven assists and four steals. Derrick Rose led the Knicks with 26 points.

HEAT 108, HORNETS 101

Dion Waiters scored 24 points while Goran Dragic added 22 points and 10 assists as Miami beat Charlotte to move within a half-game of a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Luke Babbitt scored 12 points, Hassan Whiteside had 10 points and 15 rebounds and James Johnson added 10 points for Miami. The Heat are 20-4 in their last 24 games - the NBA's best record in that span. Kemba Walker scored 33 points for Charlotte.

WIZARDS 123, NUGGETS 113

John Wall scored 30 points and Bradley Beal had 23 as Washington beat short-handed Denver. Otto Porter Jr added 22 points for the Wizards. They have won nine of their last 12 on the road, including their first back-to-back set on the road this season. Denver starters Nikola Jokic and Danilo Gallinari were out because of illness and Kenneth Faried was sidelined because of a back injury. Gary Harris had 26 points for the Nuggets.

MAGIC 98, BULLS 91

Elfrid Payton had 22 points, 14 assists and 14 rebounds for his second straight triple-double as Orlando rallied to beat Chicago. Evan Fournier added 20 points to help Orlando erase a 13-point, second-half deficit and snap a two-game losing streak. Jimmy Butler scored 21 points for Chicago. The Bulls have lost three straight.

HAWKS 110, NETS 105

Dennis Schroder scored 31 points while Paul Millsap added 24 as the Atlanta Hawks snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over Brooklyn. Atlanta had lost six of eight to fall three games behind fourth-place Toronto in the Eastern Conference. Sean Kilpatrick scored 27 points for NBA-worst Brooklyn.



OAKLAND: Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry (left) knocks the ball from Boston Celtics' Avery Bradley (0) during the second half of an NBA basketball game on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, in Oakland, Calif. —AP

PACERS 115, PISTONS 98

Paul George scored 13 of his 21 points in the third quarter to lead Indiana past Detroit. The Pacers swept the four-game season series

and moved two games in front of Detroit in the playoff chase. Tobias Harris had 22 points for the Pistons. —AP

BAYERN'S XABI ALONSO TO RETIRE AT END OF SEASON

BERLIN: Bayern Munich midfielder Xabi Alonso announced yesterday he would retire at the end of the season, putting an end to a long and trophy-laden career that includes every major title for club and country. "It was no easy decision," the 35-year-old, who also played at Liverpool and Real Madrid, told Bayern Munich television. "But it was the right moment. I always wanted to end my career earlier rather than too late. I still feel good so I think this is the right time." The Spaniard started his career at Basque club Real Sociedad before moving to Liverpool in 2004 and establishing himself as a

crowd favorite after scoring a 3-3 equalizer against AC Milan in the 2005 Champions League final.

Liverpool had battled back from 3-0 down and eventually won on penalties in one of the most spectacular comebacks in top-level football. Alonso earned even more trophies at Real following a 2009 move, including another Champions League title to add to the Spanish League crown and two Spanish Cups. Known for his passing game, vision and powerful shot as much as for his work ethic, Alonso became one of the most versatile midfielders of his generation, also winning the World Cup and two European

Championships with the Spanish national side.

"I really lived it all. At Real Sociedad, Liverpool, Real Madrid or Bayern Munich," said Alonso, who joined the German champions in 2014 and has added two Bundesliga titles and a German Cup to his collection. "Then there is also the national team. I never thought I would have such a great career and I hope there are still some more things to be added to those." Bundesliga leaders Bayern are chasing a treble of titles after advancing into the Champions League quarter-finals this week with a 10-2 aggregate demolition of Arsenal. — Reuters



Abdullah Marafi, Director of Youth Sports pictured after the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Salma and Rawan

BASEBALL-SOFTBALL CHALLENGER LEAGUE KICKS OFF



Mansour Marafi with his father

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A three-day Baseball/Softball Championship tournament kicked off yesterday at Hunting and Equestrian Club, Baseball Ground. More than 200 players from five different countries which include Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and the host country, Kuwait, are competing in the 3-day event. The event was organized by the Kuwait Baseball Softball Challenge League, under Kuwaiti Youth Sports.

Abdullah Marafi, Director of Youth Sports said the event showcased the best of the best from categories (by age) 15 Under, 13 Under And 10 Under categories. "There are five countries participating in this tournament. We are happy that everyone is taking the challenge. This is a beautiful sports and it develop not just physical body but also mental - and prepares our kids for

teamwork, commitment and camaraderie," Marafi said.

Kuwaitis are fond of soccer players but not the baseball players however, according to Marafi, baseball and softball is slowly gaining momentum in Kuwait especially in private schools. "I always believe that one day, baseball and softball will be famous in the GCC countries - but the challenge is how to really spread and introduce baseball in the school's activities. We started in private schools because as you know, it is famous in some private schools. The challenge is to include this sport in public schools," he said.

By next year, according to the youth director, a campaign to introduce the baseball/softball to Kuwaiti schools will be launched. The awards ceremony will be on the third day of the championship. Trophies and certificate will be given to the winners. This is the second annual Middle East/North Africa (MENA) classic tourney.



Rula and Abdullah Marafi



(Right to left) Khalid Al-Ayoub, Rakan Al-Muzaini, Abdulaziz Al-Ayoub, Caesar, Abdullah Marafi, Bader and Raddi pose for a group photo.

JUVE AFFAIR LINGERS AHEAD OF MILAN REVENGE MISSION

MILAN: Leaders Juventus host AC Milan looking to avenge a shock Serie A reverse, and hoping the fallout from allegations linking the club to an organized crime figure does not spill on to the pitch. AC Milan stunned Juventus 1-0 in October to hand the 32-times champions their second San Siro defeat of the season after a 1-0 reverse to Inter weeks earlier. But while the odds are stacked against the Rossoneri, 17 points off the pace and seven behind Napoli in the third and last Champions League qualifying spot, Juve, at least off the pitch, have gone on the defensive.

Juventus president Andrea Agnelli last month was forced to deny reports club officials were providing match tickets to a hardline 'ultra' fan with alleged links to Italy's feared 'Ndrangheta crime syndicate. But reports now say Agnelli will be summoned by a Parliamentary Anti-Mafia Commission after Italian football federation (FIGC) official, Giuseppe Pecoraro, claimed Agnelli had past "contact" with alleged 'Ndrangheta member Rocco Dominello. The 'Ndrangheta is an organized crime syndicate with origins in Calabria, but which has spread to the north of Italy.

Prosecutors are investigating its reach in the Piedmont region, whose capital is Turin, and Dominello is alleged to have had privileged relations with Juventus club officials in connection with the acquisition and distribution of match and season tickets. Agnelli has flatly denied the reports, posting a message on Twitter which said: "I have never met mafia bosses." The affair may have cast a slight shadow over Juve as they maintain their bid for a record sixth consecutive league title. But it should hardly affect Massimiliano Allegri's men on the pitch. At home, they haven't conceded defeat or a draw all season in Serie A. Juventus, who have first-leg leads over Roma and Porto in the Italian Cup semi-final and last 16 of the Champions League respectively, also remain on course for the treble.

Although that is a word goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon doesn't like to mention. "Treble is a difficult word for me to even pronounce!" Buffon said Wednesday. "Of course we have to think big, have the mentality of big clubs like Real Madrid or Bayern Munich. "But we have to keep our feet firmly on the ground, and play with humility. If you stay humble, no dreams are forbidden. Even if we only end up winning the scudetto (league title), we can't be unhappy." Juventus will be hard to beat, even if Allegri is without injured veteran defender Giorgio Chiellini. Gonzalo Higuain, Paulo Dybala and Mario Mandzukic should assure a solid front line that has helped Higuain hit 19 league goals so far, three behind Torino's 22-goal leader Andrea Belotti.

Milan coach Vincenzo Montella, meanwhile, has concerns over influential Spanish forward Suso, although he is expected to recover from a thigh muscle problem to start alongside Carlos Bacca and Gerard Defoleu. Suso has played 27 out of 27 games, only once coming off the bench, in Serie A so far. If unavailable, Lucas Ocampos will step in. In spite of the recent allegations surrounding Juventus, meeting Milan in what Milan CEO Adriano Galliani said is a "fundamental fixture" should eclipse any lingering feeling of controversy. He said: "It's a fundamental fixture that evokes great memories, from (Ruud) Gullit's goal that won us the championship to our win over them in Manchester (in the final of the 2003 Champions League)." — AFP

Italian Serie A table

MILAN: Italian Serie A table ahead of this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Juventus	27	22	1	4	56	18	67
Roma	27	19	2	6	58	25	59
Napoli	27	17	6	4	62	30	57
Lazio	27	16	5	6	47	29	53
Atalanta	27	16	4	7	42	26	52
Inter Milan	27	16	3	8	46	28	51
AC Milan	27	15	5	7	40	30	50
Fiorentina	27	11	9	7	44	37	42
Torino	27	10	9	8	51	43	39
Sampdoria	27	10	8	9	33	33	38
Chievo	27	10	5	12	29	37	35
Sassuolo	27	9	4	14	35	42	31
Cagliari	27	9	5	13	36	57	31
Udinese	27	8	7	12	29	36	30
Genoa	27	7	8	12	30	41	29
Bologna	27	7	7	13	24	41	28
Empoli	27	5	7	15	15	39	22
Palermo	27	3	6	18	23	53	15
Crotone	27	3	5	19	21	45	14
Pescara	27	2	6	19	28	59	12

TAME CITY FRUSTRATED

 Man City	0
 Stoke City	0

MANCHESTER: Manchester City failed to fire in a frustrating 0-0 home draw with Stoke City on Wednesday that dealt a damaging blow to their Premier League title hopes and left them 10 points adrift of leaders Chelsea. City, who had won their previous four league games, were bereft of ideas and attacking threat in a dismal first half and only came to life after the break as Leroy Sane and David Silva missed good chances and Kelechi Iheanacho volleyed wide in stoppage time.

Stoke had been much the better side in the first half and should have taken the lead when Mame Biram Diouf scuffed an early effort, but they held on bravely as City upped the pressure towards the end. The result left City third on 56 points, behind second-placed Tottenham Hotspur on goal difference, having failed to claw back any significant ground on Antonio Conte's table-toppers. Stoke remain ninth on 36 points. "Frustrated is a tough word," City boss Pep Guardiola told Sky Sports. "We didn't win but we didn't lose. We created a lot of chances and they didn't. We tried. We made everything and fought like never before."

With fixtures coming thick and fast as City continue to fight on three fronts, Guardiola had tinkered with his team, dropping defender John Stones, playmaker Silva and forward Raheem Sterling. If he was hoping to inject fresh legs and added impetus, however, he would have been sorely disappointed with their first-half display as a sluggish City failed to create a single clear chance. Stoke, who had scored just one and conceded 19 in their eight previous Premier League visits to the Etihad, began with purpose and should have taken the lead when Diouf made a poor connection with an effort that was easily saved after six minutes.

It took until the second half for City



MANCHESTER: Stoke City's Irish midfielder Glenn Whelan (left) watches Manchester City's Serbian defender Aleksandar Kolarov head the ball during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Stoke City at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on March 8, 2017. — AP

to crank into gear as Guardiola summoned Silva off the bench to generate some momentum. They came close to breaking the deadlock when Sane lashed an effort over the bar after 60 minutes and then Silva pulled an one wide when bearing down on goal. Silva

had another shot from outside the box deflected wide before Nicolas Otamendi's header landed on the roof of the net, but City's best chance arrived in stoppage time when Iheanacho could only steer Kevin De Bruyne's excellent cross wide. — Reuters

MOURINHO OUT FOR REVENGE AS MAN UNITED VISIT CHELSEA IN CUP

LONDON: Jose Mourinho takes his Manchester United side back to former club Chelsea on Monday with a place in the FA Cup semi-finals at Wembley up for grabs and a score to settle with his old employers. Mourinho endured a chastening return in October when Chelsea crushed United 4-0, a humiliating blow for the Portuguese at the hands of the club who sacked him for the second time last season. With Chelsea blazing a trail at the Premier League's summit and United way off the pace in sixth with a battle to ensure Champions League qualification ahead, the incentive is there for Mourinho to inflict revenge on Antonio Conte's side. Whether United will have the tools to land a glove on Chelsea, however, remains to be seen.

A testament to the fantastic job that Conte has done at Stamford Bridge is their 10-point lead at the top, a remarkable turnaround considering they sacked Mourinho 14 months ago with the club hovering above the relegation zone. When Chelsea beat United in October they were just getting into gear, having embarked on a 13-match winning run that would see them put clear water between themselves and their rivals. Since that streak was ended by Tottenham Hotspur in January,

Chelsea have remained unbeaten with a watertight defense that has conceded just 20 times all season, the joint fewest in the top flight.

United's hopes of breaching that backline suffered a blow when striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who has scored 26 goals in his first season at the club, was banned for three games for elbowing Bournemouth's Tyrone Mings in their Premier League clash last weekend. United are also facing a fixture pile-up while Monday's opponents have no such issues. With home and away Europa League ties to play against Russian side Rostov, either side of the cup clash, United play three times in eight days. Chelsea, meanwhile, have not kicked a ball since beating West Ham United on Monday and will not play again until next Saturday. The FA Cup has enjoyed something of a return to form this season, featuring heroic giant-killing acts and a string of minnows defying the odds. Non-league Lincoln City, the first minor league team to reach the quarter-finals in 103 years, will play on Saturday against 12-times winners Arsenal, who ended the hopes another National League Sutton United in the last round. —Reuters



Mexico City Hosts the 3rd Round of 2017 WRC

Live on Red Bull TV: Tavo Vildosola Reveals Untold Stories



Tavo Vildosola

The FIA World Rally Championship roars into the heart of one of the world's largest cities this weekend when Mexico City hosts thrilling high-speed action. Huge crowds will pack the iconic Zócalo square to watch exciting new-era World Rally Cars fight for tenths of a second at the opening two speed tests of Rally Guanajuato Mexico, the third round of the 2017 season.

The rally will build a 1.57km asphalt test in the square and surrounding streets, an area more accustomed to receiving foreign heads of state and hosting national celebrations than echoing to the sound of new-specification World Rally Cars. It will be driven twice by all the WRC's star drivers, including championship leader and 2016 rally winner Jari-Matti Latvala and four-time world champion Sébastien Ogier, to provide a full evening's entertainment.

Introducing the man who every road in Mexico fears. Meet off-road guru – and latest red Bull TV guest reporter – Tavo Vildosola

When it comes to chewing up the gravel roads of Mexico and spitting them out, there's nothing that Tavo Vildosola doesn't know. An off-road racing expert, Baja 1000 & Baja 500 winner with Hollywood appeal, Tavo will bring his charm and good looks to the Rally Mexico Red Bull TV broadcast next weekend. Alongside his commentary on dirt racing in the live broadcast event, he'll also share with viewers untold stories from his experience as a Tinseltown stunt driver, most recently in Will Smith's movie "Bright" releasing this summer.

The 35-year-old enjoys an accomplished career at the very top of off-road racing in the USA and his native Mexico, armed with an 850-horsepower, V8-engined Trophy Truck. This combination of Hollywood glamour and raw driving talent makes him the perfect partner for Red Bull TV presenter Mike Chen.

As Red Bull TV guest reporter on the latest round of the World Rally Championship from 10-12 March, Tavo will tell sto-

ries that can't be heard anywhere else. As Rally Mexico is one of the most challenging events of the year, Tavo begins his reporting in the Mexican leather capital of Leon, but the stories won't stop there.

It's lucky that the city is well known for its boots (around 70% of all shoes in Mexico are made in Leon) because Tavo and Mike are going to need a strong pair of soles during the rally weekend. Red Bull TV will send them off into the countryside to really uncover what Rally Mexico is all about bringing to life for viewers at home the tolls that heat, dust, and gravel take on its prey. With high altitudes and massive rock obstacles, it's a rally that definitively proves who's got the strongest car and biggest *cojones*.

Tavo doesn't expect it to be tough to be behind the mic; he's endured racing non-stop on stages that can be more than 1000 kilometres long, sometimes spending 23 hours or more in the truck (which is actually the size of a small house).

"Some of the roads used for our Baja events are actually quite similar to those on the WRC, so I've got a good idea of exactly what the guys are in for," says Tavo, who comes from the Mexicali area of Mexico, close to the US border, and started driving when he was 11.

"WRC is in many ways completely different than what I do, but I have such a huge admiration for these drivers and I love that Red Bull TV gives fans who can't be here the chance to watch the action live. Off-road racing has been part of my life since I could walk, and now I'm going to use that experience to tell the viewers at home exactly what it feels like and make sure they don't miss any of the best surprises from the weekend."

A word with Tavo Vildosola

How did you get into racing?

"Well, in our area of Mexico there are many second or even third generation racers, and I'm one of them. My dad was a

driver and I guess that's where my passion started: firstly with bikes, and then as soon as I was old enough to reach the pedals, I moved onto cars. Where I grew up, you're surrounded by the desert, and that's probably why it's the only area of Mexico where soccer isn't the national sport. Instead, our national sport is racing and there's a real culture of motorsport, which is what I was raised in. I made my way up through the ranks and the peak for me was winning the Baja 1000 – which is our equivalent of Indy or Le Mans. It's an amazing race."

How different is the truck you drive on Baja events to the WRC machines you will see on Rally Mexico?

"Oh man, they're completely different. We've got a V8, two-wheel drive and one metre of suspension travel, whereas the WRC cars are so light and nimble. Our trucks are real endurance beasts, so they can go absolutely anywhere, whereas the WRC drivers are picking their lines and it's more like a sprint. But in my opinion the drivers in the WRC are the best in the world, even more than Formula 1 drivers, as they are constantly reacting to changing circumstances and having to deal with new things. I actually met a Formula 1 driver recently: I took Checo Perez out in my truck at a sponsor event in Mexico and he absolutely loved it! That's the thing with us Mexicans, we love all types of motorsport."

What's the difference between being an off-road driver and a Hollywood stunt driver?

"They're a bit different! For the latest movie, my job was to turn up at about three in the afternoon then spend the rest of the day and most of the night doing some cool driving with cool cars. It was an amazing time and I got to meet some real A-list stars and other fantastic people. Can you even call that a job? Off-road is obviously a more serious business: you have to read the road in front of you, there's no stopping apart for fuel, and you've got some tough competitors. I love both, but of course racing is my passion: the movies are a bit of fun."

Onto other serious business then: who's going to win Rally Mexico?

"Now there's a tough question. It's been really close and I wouldn't like to say. What we've seen so far this year is that it's been very evenly matched, with an amazingly high level of driving. But these roads in Mexico are tough. You've got to treat them with respect, so it's going to be the driver who shows the best consistency as well as speed."

What are you looking forward to most about being a guest reporter on Red Bull TV?

"Being able to see the inside of the sport

from a privileged position and admire the best drivers in the world going about their work. Hopefully I can also bring my perspective to what I am seeing and give some insight into what a driver goes through on these roads in Mexico. We're all extremely fortunate to be doing what we are doing, so I'm looking forward to being an ambassador for the sport generally: that's really important."

Do you think you might give the WRC a go yourself one day?

"I'd love to, but it's so specialised. What's a lot closer to what we do is the Dakar Rally. Of course I'd love to have the opportunity to try that one day, but as well as my racing I have my day job – we've got a family logistics business, operating all over Mexico and the United States – so it would be tough to take a month off just to go racing. Much as I would love to!"

About Tavo Vildosola:

Tavo Vildosola is an off-road racer from Mexico. Born on February 1, 1982, Tavo grew up in Mexicali, Baja California as the son of an off-road racer, Gus. He rode dirt bikes in the desert from the age of three, and began racing in 2000 when he shared a Class 1 buggy at the San Felipe 250.

After winning his class at the Baja 1000 in 2003 together with Brian Ickler, Tavo began racing a ProTruck in 2005, and scored back-to-back class championships in the next two years. When he stepped up to the premier Trophy Truck category for the 2007 Baja 1000, he finished second with his father.

Three years later, they became the first Mexican team to claim the overall win the famous Baja 1000, which is otherwise dominated by the United States. They repeated the feat in 2012, on the 45th edition of the race, although the result was appealed some days later.

Back in 2010, Tavo and his Red Bull Trophy Truck were special guests at the Red Bull X-Fighters in Mexico City, opening the show in front of more than 40,000 spectators.

As well as helping to run the family team and their logistics business, Tavo is a keen skier and scuba diver.

So there you have it: all you need to know about Red Bull TV's latest dynamic duo on Rally Mexico. Mike and Tavo will also be joined by Citroen WRC driver Craig Breen as their resident expert in Leon. Having finished fifth on both the opening rounds of the championship this year – in Monte-Carlo and Sweden – the Irishman is only doing the recce for Mexico: which means that he'll be able to bring another driver's eye perspective during the rally to Red Bull TV.



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Mike Chen
Red Bull TV presenter

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Tavo Vildosola
Mexican Off Road Racer and Red Bull TV guest reporter

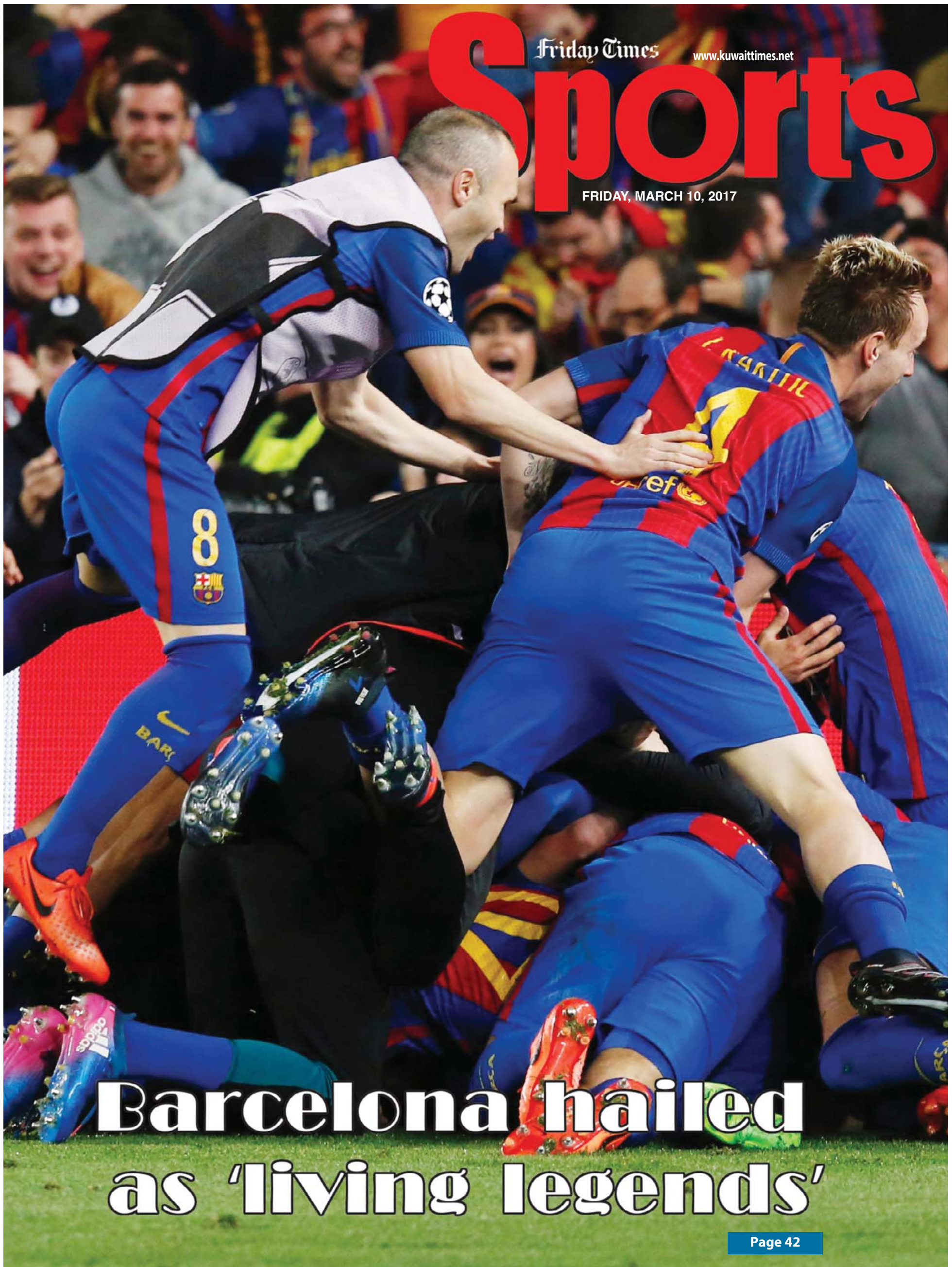
BROADCAST SCHEDULE

HIGHLIGHT SHOW (30min)	Friday 10 March	10:00pm local CST (CET + 7hrs)
LIVE COVERAGE (90min)	Saturday 11 March	10:50am (CST)
HIGHLIGHT SHOW (30min)	Saturday 11 March	10pm (CST)
HIGHLIGHT SHOW (30min)	Sunday 12 March	10pm (CST)

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FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2017



**Barcelona hailed
as 'living legends'**