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His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

AMIR CONGRATULATES CITIZENS, EXPATS ON ADVENT OF RAMADAN

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated the Kuwaiti public and expatriates on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. An Amiri Diwan statement said yesterday that His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-

Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah family apologize for not receiving well-wishers this year. Only senior statesmen, brass and diplomats will be received. It also expressed best wishes of more prosperity, safety and development for the Arab and Muslim worlds.



See Pages 4 & 5

THUMBS UP!



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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There has been a big media fuss over US President Donald Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, because he raised his thumb to express happiness. Some American analysts thought this gesture is unacceptable and rejected in Saudi Arabia and the Middle East, but after a clarification by Saudi advisors, it became clear that the Americans are worried for no real reason. It was complete stupidity - I don't know who said or wrote that, but they were wrong.

Some media sites in America mocked the gesture, ridiculing the US president for allegedly embarrassing the US on his first visit to a foreign country. But this gesture is not disturbing anyone. It reflects satisfaction, happiness and victory. I do not know who can imagine that this ges-

ture is rejected here! The good thing is that an advisor at the Saudi foreign ministry read about the allegations and responded unequivocally, explaining that these claims are nonsense, adding that there are no prohibitions on such gestures.

In fact, the late Saudi King Abdullah gave a thumbs up at the Elysee Palace in Paris in 2007. I have no idea where this gesture comes from, but it is definitely not rude here. I do believe there is a lesson learned from this silly incident - not to believe or trust everything you read online because you never know who is the source.

Traveling around the world has plenty of benefits, starting with seeing new places and experiencing new cultures, food and even meeting new people, so it is

good to know that the thumbs up is acceptable here. Whoever wrote that statement online is a complete idiot who has probably never been to the Middle East in his entire life. I am from the Middle East and I know that the thumbs up gesture is a good way to show how happy and content you are.

So, for all those who flash the thumbs up sign for victory - keep doing it. Whoever says otherwise, tell them to stop saying foolish things. The Middle East is no less civilized and they can stop saying things that make no sense. Thumbs up everyone! Trump's trip was successful and a joy to watch.

WAR AGAINST TERRORISM VS. TERRORISM AGAINST WAR: A VICIOUS CYCLE



By Nejoud Al-Yagout

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Do we know that it is a form of madness to watch our sons and daughters fight in the name of nationalism and defense? And how dare we use music to glorify such madness? Music is sacred. And to have a band procession salute the flag and soldiers is preposterous. It is as insane as watching someone getting raped on television while listening to Beethoven's Symphony Number 9!

But since we see others supporting war, we think it is a necessary evil. Because we are fast asleep. And our dream has become a nightmare, and though it seems elusive, we can awaken from this stupor at any time. We just have to look closer and realize that we are allowing this hell to persist. By supporting war, we are only cheer-leading the fight of evil against evil. And we are strengthening the evil in our own selves when we justify violence.

There is no good in war. No good side. Killing is never "good". We have brainwashed ourselves to think we are separate from one another. We are the ones who created borders to "protect". We are the ones who created class systems that are divisive to disenfranchise our fellow brothers and sisters and create opportunities for burglary and crime. We are the ones who created enemies.

We are the ones who created refugees. We are the ones who created a monetary system and institutions of power and expansionism. We are the ones who created both armies and terrorists to protect land that belongs to Earth, to seize resources that belong to Earth and all sentient beings. And as long as we are slaves to greed and our egos, as long as we are not aligned with our inner divinity, we will continue to see violence in our world.

We need to heal from our collective sickness instead of creating more opportunities to threaten one another. We can find ways to protect ourselves from dangerous people who want to harm us without bombing an entire country, raping its women and displacing innocents. What is this madness? One dictator, one enemy, one government; and an entire country has to pay the price?

And then we proceed to cheer the troops? How sick are we? What's worse is when genocide is accepted because one ego decides that the nation should be purged of an entire race or religion.

We are all the same. We are killing the life source that pulses through each and every living being. We are killing fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers. We are killing people whose main concern is to provide a safe life for their families. We are killing dreams and possibilities. And people who protest war are considered ideal-

We are here to love each other and use science and technology to take care of the planet and bring us closer to one another.

ists, dreamers, even rebels in some parts of the world. Well we need these dreamers, these so-called rebels, to remind us that this is no longer acceptable.

The planet is begging us to transform ourselves. We have been given the blessing of consciousness, but are using it to cease existing rather than coexisting. Why is fear permitted and love not? This is because we have been taught to believe that chaos is a way of life. If it were, then most of us would be slaughtering each other

and we would not feel pain at such horror.

It is time we awaken and realize that war and terrorism are both forms of insanity. And there is no justification whatsoever to not live with one another. We are a gift to each other. We are here to love each other and use science and technology to take care of the planet and bring us closer to one another. But as long as we take sides, we will become as savage as those fighting the battles. There is nothing glamorous about heroes and villains. There is nothing glamorous about the war against terrorism.

The war against terrorism has only been successful in creating terrorism against war. And we will continue to perpetuate this cycle until we realize that the only way to peace is through peace. This is no longer about picking sides or deciding which group is evil. There is no justification for terrorism. We all agree with that. But there is also no justification whatsoever for war either. This is what we need to remind ourselves. War will make the rich richer, the poor poorer, the angry angrier and will give the arms industry a reason to keep supplying enemy combatants with more and more weapons.

Earth is beautiful and healthy and can sustain itself. Why are we destroying it? Why are we polluting it? And why is that though the majority of us want peace, war seems to always find a way to close our hearts? We have managed to find ways to glorify war. Now it is time to glorify peace. And one day, there will be neither war nor peace, just being-ness. But, until then, let's root for peace!

— Photo by Djinane Alsuwayeh

In my view

RAMADAN KAREEM!

By Sana Kalim

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To everyone, happy Ramadan in advance! May you have a blessed and hopeful Ramadan filled to the brim with true happiness. To parents - thank you for being there for us; thank you so much for keeping us hidden away from the worst that is to come. To friends and family - thank you for brightening up our days. I am writing to remind us all, myself included, on the purpose of Ramadan.

During the blessed month of Ramadan, Muslims all over the world abstain from food, drink and other physical needs during daylight hours (such as smoking or sex). But Ramadan is much more than just not eating and drinking - it is a time to purify the soul, refocus attention on God and practice self-discipline and sacrifice.

Fasting during the month of Ramadan is considered one of the five pillars of Islam - the five activities that shape a Muslim's life. Fasting in the month of Ramadan is an annual observance - Muslims take an entire month out of their lives to observe this ritual and rededicate themselves to worship and faith.

Muslims are called upon to use this month to reevaluate their lives in light of Islamic guidance. We are to make peace with those who have wronged us, strengthen ties with family and friends and do away with bad habits - essentially to clean up our lives, our thoughts and our feelings. The Arabic word for "fasting" literally means "to refrain" - and it means not only refraining from food and drink, but also from evil actions, thoughts and words.

The physical effects of the fast are felt by Muslims as a reminder of those who suffer throughout the year - the poor, homeless and refugees - who cannot meet their basic needs. It reminds Muslims not to be wasteful and to feel empathy for those who face hunger on a daily basis. We should feel gratitude for the bounties of Allah: Clean water, sufficient healthy food, the comfort of a home and the health of our family members. There are so many in the world who survive without these basic needs, and Ramadan is a time for us to give thanks and reaffirm our commitment to helping those in need.

We should be reminded of this during the breaking of the fast as well. I know many who gain weight over this month. We need to abstain from overindulging in food! Fifteen hours of fasting is not equivalent to the suffering most feel around the globe. And this number has increased, proven by the fact that 7.5 billion people now inhabit this Earth that Allah (SWT) so beautifully crafted for us! Please, have a small meal of dates and milk, then turn to pray. We need to be a lot more sincere than we are right now.

During Ramadan, every part of our body must be cleansed. This ablution is done by restraining the tongue from backbiting and gossiping, as we always should. The eyes must restrain themselves from looking at unlawful things. The hand must give in charity and not touch or take anything that does not belong to it. The ears must stay away from listening to idle talk or obscene words. The feet must refrain from going to sinful places.

Therefore, fasting is not merely physical but is rather the total commitment of the person's body and soul to the spirit of the fast. Ramadan is a time to practice self-restraint - a time to cleanse the body and soul from impurities and refocus on the worship of God and charity to mankind.

To non-Muslims, I hope you all have a blessed month.

Till the next article insha Allah.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Arabic coffee pots, known locally as dallah, lined up in this file photo. Arabic coffee is often served with dates and is especially popular during Ramadan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

In my view

GRIMACE



By Dana Al Rashid

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So should we make them eternally sorry for not winning this arbitrary genetic lottery? Has empathy become so foreign to us that we can no longer imagine what's it like to be in their shoes?

I see this almost every day, but I don't think I'll ever get used to it: In the coffee shop I often go to, locals come in, wearing the most fashionable attire, carrying luxurious handbags (if women), and stepping outside their expensive cars; usually accompanied by family, friends, and loved ones. But, despite all the comfort and luxury they effortlessly enjoy; they are always frowning! It doesn't matter if the weather is mild or harsh, or if it's a work day or even a holiday, the grimace is always there; accompanying them in all circumstances.

The waiter greets them, but his welcoming hellos are ignored. I try to find them an excuse; perhaps they don't speak English, perhaps they are shy, perhaps...But, before I ponder any further, they request their order in fluent, harsh English. An English that is void of hellos, excuse mes, and thank yous; it comes with a condescending, impatient tone.

I accidentally lock eyes with one of these "frowning" customers. She gives me an aggressive stare, all too ready to attack. I look away... I must have been mad thinking I could give her the usual friendly smile.

And as soon as her waiting time exceeds five minutes, she starts huffing impatiently and grimacing some more, rushing the poor waiter who nervously prepares her order and hands it over, praying that he gets it perfectly.

Because if he doesn't, God forbid, he'd be in big trouble. She snatches her order and leaves, with no sign of gratitude, not even a goodbye. I stop in awe, amazed at how such interaction became the norm here.

No wonder we are the 4th unfriendliest nation in the world, according to CNN travel (2013)! We also happen to be the world's worst destination for expats, according to The Expat Insider 2016 poll.

Yes, we are privileged; we're blessed with luxuries and comfort beyond what labor workers could ever have in this lifetime. So should we make them eternally sorry for not winning this arbitrary genetic lottery? Has empathy become so foreign to us that we can no longer imagine what's it like to be in their shoes?

They work for gruelingly long hours for meager pay, taking all of our insults with a smile. For they have no other choice, if they want to continue feeding their families. Just like anyone else, they like being treated with kindness and respect. But unfortunately, kindness and empathy became so rare that they would actually come up to thank you for being nice!

We have everything we want, yet we grimace in discontentment. True, we may have everything, but what we truly lack is patience and understanding that extends to others.

What are your favorite Ramadan memories?

Story and photos
by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

The holy month of Ramadan is here and people are gearing up for a month of fasting, prayer and doing good deeds. Ramadan is a month of happiness, because it drives us to relive the memories of our childhood every year and pass them down through generations. What does Ramadan leave in you? And how do you remember it?

Throughout the world, religious occasions are often linked with family gatherings, food and drink, besides worship. So when I asked these questions to people, the first answer was inevitably one regarding food. Among the most popular dishes that stirred nostalgic memories of Ramadan: white bulgur soup and red jelly!

"My mother makes these two dishes only during Ramadan - they are symbolic and delicious too!" said Sanaa Ali Sana, a college student. Meanwhile, Khalid Al-Ali, also a college student, enthusiastically said: "Tashreeb, which is made of layers of crepe soaked in chicken or beef stew; and elgaimat, dough balls dipped in sugar syrup. Ramadan will not be the same without them!"

Sharing food, a local tradition

Hanouf Bader, a housewife, said every Thursday in Ramadan, she cooks a large quantity of a traditional Kuwaiti dish called harees - mashed barley with shredded beef and chicken - and distributes it to the neighbors. It's naflah, food charity, she said, and feels proud when they call her after they

break their fast to tell her that every year they always look forward to it because it's the best!

The liveliness of this month is similar to celebrations in the past, even if some manifestations of the celebration have changed or disappeared. Hayat Al-Qattan, a retired employee, recalls Ramadan in Kuwait when life was a lot simpler, yet harder.

"When I was nine, or 11 - I can't remember - my friends and I played sharrookah, where each one of us brought an ingredient to cook a meal. Some of us got rice, another provided the water, while others brought oil and onions. After that, we used to gather twigs and rocks and cook in one of the neighbor-



Laylat Al-Qader is one of the most important nights of Ramadan, when during the last 10 days of the holy month the Quran was revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). It is also often called the 'Night of Power'. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

hood's corners. I used to live in the Al-Mutabba neighborhood of Sharq," she reminisced.

"I also remember the time we used to go tricking and treating in the middle of Ramadan, a tradition known as girgian. At that time, girgian consisted of nuts, sugarcoated chickpeas and mints that people brought from neighboring countries and India. They were valuable to us and rare, so we used to have just a little and save the rest for Eid Al-Fitr," Qattan added.

Spending more time with family, friends

The distinctive habits of people in Ramadan are not limited to eating and drinking. Khaled Al-Ali said he usually prefers to stay at home most of the time, and only attend social gatherings and pray in mosques.

On the other hand, Dana Al-Gharabally, an employee at the ministry of information, calls Ramadan the 'golden month'. "My mother used to take me and my sisters to buy gold during the holy month in preparation for Eid. Gold was a lot cheaper those days," she recalled.

In contrast, Abu Walid, a senior Kuwaiti citizen, bemoaned not being able to fast. Although he hasn't forgotten the childhood memories associated with this month, the thing he longs for most is fasting itself.

"After I was diagnosed with diabetes, I've missed sharing the joy of breaking the fast after long hours of fasting with my family. Doctor's recommendation!" he said. "More than 25 years after my father's demise, I still repeat what he always said when he broke his first fast with a sip of dried apricot juice: 'This month is finished - 29 days left.' My family laughs at this anecdote as if they heard it for the first time!"



Luqaimat is a popular Middle Eastern sweet commonly eaten during Ramadan. It's made of fried balls of dough soaked in syrup.

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FAKE

CHARITIES & OUR RESPONSIBILITY

By Jamie Etheridge

Ramadan is one of my favorite months of the year. In Kuwait, people go the extra mile to give to charity and do good deeds. But sadly there are always those who try to take advantage of the holy month to exploit and cheat people.

From fake charities to scam talent shows to millionaire beggars on the streets, we are barraged by conmen trying to make an easy profit from our desire to do good deeds. Charities that claim to be helping war victims or impoverished rural villagers may be utilized to line the pockets of the unscrupulous. In the media, we see a constant stream of such scams and the reports on the details usually come after tens or hundreds of people have handed over massive sums of money.

Whenever I ask people about the problem of fake charities, they usually respond the same way: "My intention to give is what counts. If they are doing wrong and steal-

People typically don't have time to investigate to see if a charity is licensed or how their donations will be used.

ing the money, then the blame will fall to them." This may be true. But it leaves a huge problem for those in need.

Many people donate money as a percentage of their income. If that money ends up with a fake charity, or diverted for another reason or to grow someone's pockets, the blame does not lie with me. But still the victims of war will be without help because now that I've given, I don't have any more to donate.

So if, for instance, I thought I was donating money to help buy food, shelter and textbooks for refugees, I won't worry about giving again that month. But the money may never end up buying any of these things and the refugee children will continue to suffer.

The problem is that it's not always easy or possible to check on the credentials of charities. There are licensed charities in Kuwait but also many that may collect donations 'informally' - though this is now illegal. People typically don't have time to investigate to see if a charity is licensed or how their donations will be used.

There are some websites, like Charity



Navigator (charitynavigator.org), Give Well (givewell.org) and Charity Watch (charity-watch.org) that rate charities on their transparency and effectiveness. Most good charities are transparent about their budgets and spending. A good rule of thumb is that 75 percent of a charity's income should go directly to benefit those in need. Of course these resources are largely focused on US charities (though there are some international ones that do support regional needs.)

If you are planning to give to charity this Ramadan, please take the time to ensure that your donation will end up helping someone in need. Ask more questions about the charity, where it operates and what organizations it works with. You can also check for the list of charities licensed by the Kuwait government though there are many other legitimate groups here that do good work. It does require a bit more effort on our part but in the end, the benefit for those in need will be worth it.

Social Reform Society

Tele: 2251-4180 / 2256-0523
support@eslah.com
<http://www.eslah.com/main/>

Kuwait Red Crescent Society

Tele: 2481-8084 / 2483-9114
info@krccs.org.kw
<http://krccs.org.kw/>

General Secretariat of the charitable work

Tele: 1888-808 / 2267-5781
<http://www.khaironline.net/Default.aspx>

International Islamic Charitable Organization

Tele: 1808-300 / 2227-4003
info@iico.org
<https://iico.org/ar>

Shaik Abdullah al-Noory Charitable Society

Tele: 9666-6698 / 2254-0260
contact@alnouri.org

Licensed Charities in Kuwait**Islam Presentation Committee**

Tele: 9760-0074 / 2240-0057
<http://ipc.org.kw>

Patients Helping Fund Society

Tele: 2256-0061 / 2257-1741
<https://knet.phf.org.kw/site/>

Direct Aid

Tele: 1866-888 / 2265-0145
<http://direct-aid.org/cms/>

Al Najat Charitable Society

Tele: 9727-7745 / 2252-4520
<http://www.alnajat.org.kw/>

— <https://www.e.gov.kw/sites/kgenglish/Pages/CitizensResidents/IslamicServices/InfoCharity.aspx>

KPC QUASHES SOCIAL MEDIA REPORTS

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday rejected social media reports that a ship went "out of control at the Shuwaikh Port berth." A video circulated on the social media is on an incident that took place at the Port of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, the KPC said in a statement. Meanwhile, the statement noted that the Shuwaikh Port had suspended traffic due to bad weather. The KPC called for verification, checking accuracy and adhering to credibility before publishing news related to the corporation to avoid any negative impact on the country's trade reputation. The KPC is a top vital and strategic institution, considered as Kuwait's "trade and economic artery", and it contributes up to 80 percent of the state's trade, the statement stressed.

OPEC begins meeting

Meanwhile, OPEC's oil ministers started yesterday - primarily aimed at discussing extension of the November deal on cutting the crude output. Insiders said that expectations are high

that the conferees would agree on extending the accord till March 2019, beside monitoring output of the American shale oil. It is necessary that the OPEC and non-OPEC producers "send a clear message to the market to beef up its stability," according to an analyst.

The meeting comes on the heels of a session by the Joint OPEC-Non-OPEC Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC), which called for extending the agreement of cutting oil output for another nine months. Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq said the commission made progress regarding global oil markets. Furthermore, the technical committee has stressed that it, supported by OPEC secretary, will continue to provide its monthly evaluation to concerned bodies. The JMMC was founded following OPEC's 171st Ministerial Conference Decision of November 30, 2016 and the subsequent Declaration of Cooperation made at the joint OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial meeting held on December 10, 2016. — Agencies



Envoys, Chiefs of Mission (COMs) and diplomats are pictured during a meeting with First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

ENVOYS RALLY BEHIND KUWAIT'S BID FOR A NON-PERMANENT UNSC SEAT

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met with a bevy of Chiefs of Mission (COMs) diplomats yesterday, to shore up support for Kuwait as it seeks a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC), 2018-2019. Addressing the foreign envoys, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled highly appreciated the "friendly and sister countries" for their support to Kuwait during its election campaign for non-permanent membership in the UNSC was overwhelming.

The event was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, and Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's assistants. He expressed hope for more support during the election of the UNSC non-permanent members, due at the UN General Assembly on June 2, 2017. Some 40 years have elapsed since Kuwait first won a non-permanent seat in the UNSC (1978-1979), the minister said, pointing out the country is appreciative of the rabid support it has gotten since the launch of its campaign in December 2011.

On Kuwait's ties with the international community, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said that the country has always strived

to maintain friendly ties with the rest of the world, ones founded on mutual respect and an unflinching belief in sovereignty. The Kuwaiti Foreign Minister also said that it would behoove the international community to work together to overcome mounting challenges and obstacles.

Speaking on Kuwait's priorities if its aspirations for a non-permanent seat in the UNSC come to fruition, he said that the primary goal is to effectively deal

with conflicts that threaten global peace and security, stressing that this can only be done through peaceful means. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled listed other priorities, including the need to ensure a harmonious world that is void of malevolence, where nations can peacefully co-exist with one another. He also underscored the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry's resolve to work closely with all international envoys in order to address the concerns of the UNSC. — KUNA



First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with envoys, Chiefs of Mission (COMs) and diplomats. — KUNA

RESIDENCY SUSPENSION

KUWAIT: Upon instructions from Ministry of Interior's Acting Residency Affairs Director, the Residency Affairs Department has temporarily suspended the renewal of residency visas of dependant relatives other than wives and kids, such as parents, siblings and others holding article 22 visas. The instructions also stated that all transactions would be submitted to relevant immigration departments to be granted temporary three month renewals until a detailed report about each respective case is made and submitted to the Residency System Central Department. These include all needed documents about both sponsors and dependants in addition to a system printout with all data. The final reports will then be made on each case pending final review by Mol's Assistant Undersecretary for Citizenship and Passport Affairs before renewing the residency.

News

i n b r i e f

Fighting cyber-crime

VIENNA: Kuwait has called for concluding a UN convention for combating cyber-crime. This was the core of a statement delivered by Kuwait's Deputy Permanent Delegate to the UN in Vienna Abdullah Al-Obaidi at the 26th session of the UN Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ). He stressed the significance of fighting extremism and intensifying media awareness campaigns promoting moderation. Al-Obaidi said that Kuwait had ratified the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto in 2016. Considering the convention a legal base for international cooperation has been prompted by realization of the dangers of the cross-border organized crime and its growing connection with terrorist activities and acts, and the terrible impact on countries' security and stability, Al-Obeidi noted. He said that terrorism knows no religion or and no identity, calling to recalling the UN General Assembly resolution 177/70 reaffirming that "terrorism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group."

Tanzania lauds Kuwait

KUWAIT: Tanzania's Vice President Samia Suluhu Hassan has lauded Kuwait's support to development in her country. During a meeting with the Kuwaiti ambassador to Tanzania Jasem Al Najem, Hassan highlighted the deep-rooted bilateral ties, and stressed the leading role of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in backing development in the East African state, the Kuwaiti embassy in the capital Dar es Salaam added in a statement yesterday. The first project KFAED financed in Tanzania dates back to 1975, she said, pointing out Kuwait's elevated status among the world countries in philanthropic activities. Hassan noted that the Tanzanian side is seeking to enhance partnership with the Kuwaiti charity organizations, including the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), for launching more development projects in the country. She said that the KRCS has financed a project on woman health, being supervised by the embassy.

Role of civil society

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh yesterday stressed the significance of the role played by the civil society and volunteers in a variety of fields in Kuwait. This role supports the government efforts that aim to promote the society and the services offered to the citizens, the minister added while honoring a host of representatives of voluntary teams. She also underlined the importance of engaging the youth in drawing up development plans, expressing pride of the Kuwaiti youth she got to deal with, saying they are the main pillars of the nation's future, who will be entrusted with achieving development. Al-Sabeeh lauded many of the achievements realized by the Kuwaiti youth voluntary teams, that were appreciated by state officials, expressing hope for more in the future. These voluntary teams have contributed through working with the government bodies to issuing a host of resolutions that fulfilled the expectations of a huge category of the people in the various fields, she said.

Crime

Report

CHILD KIDNAPPED, RAPED BY 5 MEN

KUWAIT: A Syrian recently reported that five unidentified people kidnapped and raped his 13-year-old son, said security sources. The man said that his son knew one of the rapists through playing an online video game with him. The man invited the boy to meet him at a famous shopping mall in Kuwait. Once there, the man asked the boy to go with him and they drove to an under-construction building in Zahra. The father added that four others were waiting in the building into which they forced the boy, tied him up and took turns raping him. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Deaths from car accident

A citizen and her son were killed yesterday when their vehicle crashed along Al-Salmi highway, said security sources noting that the mother was killed instantly while her son was rushed to Jahra hospital with very serious injuries where he died later on.

Woman harassed

An Egyptian woman reported that she was harassed by a man while out shopping. She filed a police report, noting that the Syrian man has been following her and tried to grope her as she walked past a restaurant while shopping. A case was filed and the suspect is being summoned for further investigations.

Alcohol smugglers arrested

Four Georgians were recently arrested in two separate cases of smuggling alcohol into the country, said security sources. In the first case, narcotics detectives were tipped off concerning a juice shipment arriving from a GCC state that was concealing alcohol. The shipment arrived six weeks before the suspect showed up at Shuaiba port to collect it. On searching the shipment, detectives found 2,408 bottles of liquor. The suspect led the police to his two accomplices. Another Georgian was also arrested at Shuaiba port for importing 6,044 bottles of liquor hidden in a bottled water shipment.

Rental car missing

An Egyptian reported that a friend of hers rented a car in her name two months ago. So far, the friend has not paid the car rental fees nor returned the car. She added that the friend also stopped answering her calls. A case was filed.

Traffic fisticuffs

A citizen and a Jordanian recently exchanged assault accusations at Shuwaikh industrial area police station following a traffic accident. Further investigations are in progress.

Fire in Rai

A huge fire broke out yesterday in a petrochemicals factory in Rai and firemen from several stations rushed to the scene to fight the flames. Three firemen suffered from smoke inhalation and thermal stress while an Asian worker sustained serious burns and was rushed to hospital for treatment.

Marijuana smuggler

A female Asian was recently arrested on arrival at Kuwait International Airport with the possession of six kilos of marijuana concealed within her luggage, said security sources.

Illicit pregnancy

A citizen recently reported that his housemaid was in labor in her bedroom and an ambulance was dispatched for help. On arrival, Paramedics found out that the maid had already given birth and that she had put the baby in a plastic bag to get rid of it because it was the result of an illicit relationship. Paramedics managed to save the baby's life. A case was filed and the boyfriend is being summoned for further investigations.



KUWAIT: Kuwait military officers perform aerobatics. Kuwait Military Forces consists of several joint defense forces. The governing bodies are the Kuwait Ministry of Defense, the Kuwait Ministry of Interior, the Kuwait National Guard and the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate. The Amir of Kuwait is the commander-in-chief of all defense forces and the Crown Prince is the deputy commander. — KUNA

HEROIN TRAFFICKING CASES MULTIPLY

By Sara Ahmed

KUWAIT: Heroin smuggling and abuse seem to be on the rise in Kuwait. A growing number of arrests of heroin dealers and delivery men indicate possible increased use, especially among the local youth population. Heroin, typically smuggled in from Afghanistan and Iran, has a high street value in Kuwait and is one of the most popular drugs of choice along with crystal meth and Tramadol pills.

In 2016, Kuwait police seized what they claimed to be the largest ever quantity of pure heroin smuggled into the country. They raided a house and arrested a Kuwaiti man in possession of 2.5 kilos of pure heroin. But only a few months later, a

Sri Lankan man was busted with three kilos of heroin, though its purity was never reported.

But the trade continues to flourish. Just this week, Ahmadi detectives recently arrested an Indian man for selling narcotics by delivering them to his clients in various camps and chalets, said security sources noting that suspect was arrested in possession of 21 bags of heroin and KD 1,500 in cash. In another case, a Bangladeshi man was caught in possession of 40 bags of heroin and ICE (crystal meth) in Ardhiya. Security sources noted that the suspect tried to resist arrest and assaulted a police officer dislodging the officer's shoulder. The man was eventually controlled and apprehended. At least 17 people have been put to death for drug trafficking in Kuwait.

Message for US citizens

As noted in our Worldwide Caution, terrorist groups remain intent on targeting US citizens, our allies, and our interests. Terrorist groups have launched attacks during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan in the past. The US government remains highly concerned about possible attacks against US citizens, facilities, businesses, places of worship, and perceived US and western interests in the region and worldwide.

While we are not aware of specific threats against private US citizens in Kuwait, we encourage citizens to take steps to enhance their safety and security. US citizens should maintain a high level of vigilance, review personal security plans, and remain alert to their surroundings at all times. The following are common sense measures you and your family can take to increase your personal safety and security:

Stay Informed - Monitor the media for the latest security developments.

Avoid Crowds - Large gatherings can quickly become dangerous.

Keep A Low Profile - Be aware of how others dress and behave in public and try to blend in.

Vary Your Routes And Times Of Travel - Being less predictable makes you more difficult to target.

Be Aware Of Your Surroundings - Understand what "belongs" and what does not.

Avoid Traveling Alone - Avoid isolated areas, especially after dark. Tell friends, colleagues, or neighbors where you're going and when you intend to return.

Know Where You Are Going And Your Destination - Find

exits and have a plan to escape. Select "safe havens" along your route, such as government buildings, friends' residences, shops or restaurants, or gas stations.

Always Carry A Charged Cell Phone - Make sure you have programmed emergency numbers in all your family members' phones.

Turn Off Location Services On Your Cell Phone Or Other Devices - Hackers can use those features to learn your location.

Never Post Or Otherwise Broadcast Your Location Or Where You Are Going - Only tell people where you have been, after you have departed.

Be Prepared To Postpone Or Cancel Activities.

Report concerns you may have to the police and to the US Embassy in Kuwait.

For further information:

- See the State Department's travel website for the Worldwide Caution, Worldwide Travel Alert, Travel Warnings, Travel Alerts, and Kuwait's Country Specific Information.

- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) to receive security messages and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

- Contact the US Embassy in Kuwait at 00-(965) 2259-1001 or 00-(965) 2538-6562 or fax: 00-(965) 2538-0282.

- Call 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Eastern Standard Time, Monday through Friday (except US federal holidays).

International

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2017

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for revenge**

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revokes order
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marry Pakistani
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BRUSSELS: US President Donald Trump (L) and French President Emmanuel Macron (R) shake hands ahead of a working lunch, at the US ambassador's residence, on the sidelines of the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) summit. — AFP

TRUMP SCOLDS NATO ON SPENDING, TERROR 'TERRORISM MUST BE STOPPED IN ITS TRACKS'

BRUSSELS: US President Donald Trump yesterday berated NATO allies for not doing enough on terrorism and spending, while stopping short of the public commitment to collective defense they had hoped for. Trump's broadside at fellow leaders during his first NATO summit came as he unveiled a 9/11 memorial at the alliance's new \$1.2 billion headquarters in Brussels which is meant to highlight allied unity and purpose.

Trump said the bombing in the British city of Manchester on Monday, claimed by the Islamic State group, showed that "terrorism must be stopped in its tracks." "The NATO of the future must include a great focus on terrorism and immigration as well as threats from Russia and NATO's eastern and southern borders," the president said. Trump denounced allies for not paying their fair share, saying that even if they met a commitment to allocate two percent of GDP to defense, it would still not be enough to meet the challenges.

"Twenty-three of the 28 member nations are still not paying what they should be paying and what they're supposed to be paying for their defense," the president said. "This is not fair to the people and taxpayers of the United States. Many of these nations owe massive amounts of money from past years," repeating a charge he had raised constantly on the campaign trail.

'Deeply troubling' links

German Chancellor Angela Merkel struck an entirely differ-

ent note as she unveiled a memorial made up of a section of the Berlin Wall to mark the end of the Cold War. "Germany will not forget the contribution NATO made in order to reunify our country. This is why we will indeed make our contribution to security and solidarity in the common alliance," she said.

The surprising mention of immigration was in line with one of Trump's key election promises to build a wall to keep out immigrants crossing into the United States from Mexico, a plan widely derided in Europe. Trump's harsh words came despite NATO saying it would formally endorse joining the US-led coalition against IS at the summit, in the face of reservations in France and Germany about getting involved in another conflict.

Shortly before his address, Trump had ran into his first problems of a landmark European trip, embarrassingly called out in public over Russia and on leaks from the probe into the Manchester terror attack. Trump announced a review of the "deeply troubling" leaks and warned that those responsible could face prosecution, the White House said.

Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May said meanwhile she would raise directly with Trump the issue of leaks from a probe into the Manchester terror attack that have left British authorities infuriated with their US counterparts. Arriving at NATO, May said she would "make clear to President Trump that intelligence which is shared between our law enforcement agencies must remain secure."

Two Donalds at odds on Russia

Trump's carefully choreographed visits to the EU and NATO in Brussels had been designed to heal divisions caused by the billionaire's harsh campaign criticisms of both institutions on the campaign trail. He called NATO "obsolete" and praised Britain's Brexit vote to leave the EU. But differences immediately emerged after his talks with the European Union's top officials Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker on climate change, trade, and above all Russia.

"I'm not 100 percent sure that we can say today-'we' means Mr President and myself-that we have a common position, common opinion about Russia," former Polish prime minister Tusk said. Trump on the campaign trail made restoring relations with Russia a key promise but he has faced bitter opposition in Washington and has since become embroiled in a scandal over alleged links to Moscow.

Tusk also called for "Western values" to be promoted, challenging former tycoon Trump's world view that self-interested deals best settle international problems. Trump came to Brussels direct from a meeting with Pope Francis at the Vatican, after visiting Saudi Arabia, Israel and the Palestinian Territories. On his arrival on Wednesday in Brussels, the city he once said had been turned into a "hellhole" by Muslim immigration, the president was greeted by around 9,000 protesters saying "Trump not welcome." — AFP

SYRIA URGES RAQQA JIHADISTS TO SURRENDER

BEIRUT: A US-backed alliance of Syrian militias promised yesterday that no harm would come to Islamic State fighters in Raqqa who turned themselves in by the end of the month, calling on them to lay down their arms ahead of an expected assault on the city. The Syrian Democratic Forces, which groups Kurdish and Arab fighters, has advanced to within a few kilometers of Raqqa city at the nearest point, in an offensive that got underway in November to encircle and capture the city.

The SDF, which includes the powerful Kurdish YPG militia, said earlier this month it expects to launch the final assault on Raqqa in early summer. YPG and SDF officials had previously given April start dates for the assault, but these slipped. The US-led coalition has not declared any time frame for the final assault on Raqqa city, which has served as Islamic State's de facto capital in Syria since the group declared its cross-border "caliphate" in 2014.

In a statement, the SDF said a May 15 appeal for militants to turn them-

selves in within 10 days had achieved "positive results", and the deadline would now be extended until May 31 based on "requests from the noble people of Raqqa". The SDF said it would guarantee the lives of militants who turn themselves in regardless of their position, "paving the way for the settlement of their situation". The safety of their families was also guaranteed, it says.

The SDF statement issued by spokeswoman Jihane Sheikh Ahmad said the extension would "allow the

greatest number possible of those who were deceived or forced to join to benefit from this opportunity". The US led coalition says some 3,000 to 4,000 Islamic State fighters are thought to be holed up in Raqqa city where they continue to erect defenses against the anticipated assault. The six-year-long Syrian war has allowed IS to seize swathes of Syria, where the group faces separate campaigns by the US-backed SDF, the Russian-backed Syrian military, and Free Syrian Army rebels backed by the United States. — Reuters

EU STRESSES ON HUMAN RIGHTS WITH ERDOGAN

BRUSSELS: EU Council President Donald Tusk yesterday stressed the importance of human rights in talks with Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan, amid tensions over Ankara's long-delayed EU accession process. Tusk, who heads the European Council of 28 EU member state leaders, and European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker met the Turkish president ahead of a NATO summit in Brussels.

"I put the question of human rights in the centre of our discussions," Tusk tweeted after the talks, which began with a brief and cordial handshake for photographers. A spokesman for Juncker said: "The EU and Turkey must and will continue to cooperate. Major issues of common interest were discussed in detail in a good and constructive atmosphere."

At another meeting on the margins of the NATO summit, Erdogan promised French President Emmanuel Macron he would "rapidly" look into the case of jailed French photojournalist Mathias Depardon, Macron's office said. According to the press freedom group Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Depardon, who has been held in Turkey for over two weeks, has begun a hunger strike. The Turkish authorities have said he was detained over "propaganda for a terror group"—a reference to outlawed Kurdish militants.

Turkey 'won't beg'

Ahead of his trip to Brussels, Erdogan said it was up to Brussels to decide whether it wants Turkey as a member of the bloc. Speaking to reporters before leaving for Brussels, Erdogan said Turkey would not behave like a "beggar" to gain membership. Speeding up the membership process was a key condition set by Turkey in a landmark agreement with the EU in March 2016 to reduce migrant flows into Europe from war-torn Syria.

But relations between the bloc and Ankara soured after a failed coup attempt in July, and worsened further during the campaign for the April referendum on strengthening Erdogan's powers. In the run-up to the referendum—which he narrowly won—Erdogan had mooted reimposing the death penalty in a move that would automatically end Turkey's EU bid. Earlier this month, Erdogan told Brussels it had no other option than to open new "chapters", or policy areas, in Turkey's long-stalled accession talks which began in 2005. Most EU states—led by Germany—officially oppose freezing the accession talks but Austria has repeatedly called for a halt. This prompted Turkey to veto all NATO cooperation with neutral Austria, although the crisis was partially resolved with a deal on Tuesday. — AFP



JAKARTA: Indonesian people stand next to human body parts at a scene where two bombers launched an attack. — AFP

INDONESIA PROBES 'IS-LINKED' SUICIDE ATTACK ON POLICE

JAKARTA: Indonesia's elite anti-terror squad was yesterday investigating a suicide bombing near a Jakarta bus station that killed three policemen in an assault authorities believe is linked to the Islamic State group. Authorities raided the houses on Java island of two men suspected of being the bombers who unleashed carnage outside the busy terminal late Wednesday, sending huge clouds of black smoke into the sky and people fleeing in panic.

Three policemen were killed, while six other officers and five civilians were injured in an assault that left body parts and shattered glass strewn across the road. Police said they believed there was a link between the attackers and the Islamic State (IS) group, without giving further details. Hundreds of Indonesians have flocked abroad to fight with the jihadists and IS-supporting militants have been behind a series of recent plots and attacks in the archipelago.

The bus station bombing was the deadliest attack in Indonesia since January 2016, when a suicide blast and gun assault claimed by IS in downtown Jakarta left four

attackers and four civilians dead. In a televised address, President Joko Widodo said he had ordered a thorough probe and was "urging all citizens across the nation to stay calm and remain united". "I convey my deepest condolences to the victims and their families—especially the police officers who passed away while performing their duty," he added.

Police believe they were specifically targeted in the bombing. The attack came as they were preparing to provide security for a traditional torch parade near the Kampung Melayu terminal, which is an area frequented by locals but not foreigners. The police's elite anti-terror squad Densus 88, which has played a leading role in tracking down and killing some of Indonesia's most wanted militants, is now taking the lead in the investigation.

Struggle with militancy

In a raid Thursday morning of one bombing suspects' house in the city of Bandung, police discovered documents about Islamic teaching and two bladed weapons, West Java province police spokesman Yusri Yunus told

AFP. The man was married with two children and used to work as a herbal medicine seller, said the spokesman.

The second suspect's house in the city of Cimahi, outside Bandung, was also searched and his mother and sister were found to be living there, said Yunus. Relatives of both men, whose identities have not been released, were taken in for questioning, he said. Asked whether there was a link between IS and the group behind the attack, national police spokesman Awi Setyono responded "yes there is", without giving further details.

Suspicion is likely to fall on local network Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), which supports IS and has been blamed for recent, mostly low-impact, attacks. The bombs used in Wednesday's attacks were made from pressure cookers, similar to a device used in an attack by a JAD militant in the Indonesian city of Bandung in February. Another figure who may come under scrutiny is Indonesian radical Bahrin Naim, who is fighting with IS in Syria and has been accused of directing a series of mostly botched terror plots in his homeland. — AFP

IRAQ PROBES REPORT OF RIGHTS ABUSES IN MOSUL OPERATION

BAGHDAD: Iraq is investigating a report that members of a Special Forces unit carried out torture, summary killings and rapes during the operation to retake Mosul, the interior ministry said yesterday. The Islamic State jihadist group seized Mosul and swathes of other territory in 2014 in an offensive aided by widespread anti-government sentiment among Sunni Arabs angered by their political marginalization and by security forces operating with impunity.

Abuses such as those described in the report in German magazine Der Spiegel that sparked the investigation could sow the seeds of future conflict even as secu-

rity forces near the end of the battle for Mosul, IS's most emblematic stronghold. "The Internal Affairs Directorate is carrying out the investigations and all the details will be announced upon completion," interior ministry spokesman Brigadier General Saad Maan told AFP.

Maan said in an earlier statement that the interior minister had ordered an investigation into the veracity of the Der Spiegel report. In the report, Iraqi photographer Ali Arkady—who has left the country with his family—said that Rapid Response Division officers and their men "torture, rape but also kill people", even when they had only "vague suspi-

cious facts" about links to IS. The Rapid Response Division is one of two Special Forces units at the forefront of the operation to recapture Mosul. Arkady gave examples of people he said were tortured or killed, often including the victims' names, and said there was a "kind of contest" between the police and Rapid Response forces over rapes and murders. He wrote that what he had initially envisioned as a positive story featuring two members of the Rapid Response force who were friends became something else after what he witnessed, and the article was headlined "Not Heroes, But Monsters."

The Rapid Response Division released a video aimed at refuting Arkady's reporting in which alleged victims speak on camera in the presence of an officer who the journalist had said was involved in abuses. Iraqi forces launched the operation to retake Mosul in October, advancing to the city and retaking its eastern side before setting their sights on its smaller but more densely populated west. More than seven months into the operation, IS now controls just a handful of areas around the Old City, a warren of narrow streets and closely spaced buildings that provides an ideal environment for the jihadists' defense. —AFP



DAMASCUS: A Syrian vendor stands at the entrance of this shop in the old city of Damascus on May 25, 2017, ahead of the start of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan. — AFP

HAMAS RULERS PUT 3 TO DEATH

GAZA CITY: Hamas said yesterday it put to death three men it had accused of killing a senior member of the militant Islamic group that rules Gaza in March. Hamas' Interior Ministry told reporters that two men were hanged and one was killed by firing squad yesterday. The three received death sentences Sunday after a brief, week-long special military court found them guilty of killing Mazen Faqha. Local rights groups slammed the trial, calling it unprecedented given its speed.

The executions took place at a police headquarters and were attended by hundreds of people, including Hamas officials and community leaders. The death of Faqha, a shadowy senior figure in Hamas' military wing, shocked Hamas, which has ruled Gaza with an iron fist for the past decade. Faqha, 38, was killed in the garage of his apartment building on March 24, shortly after he had dropped off his family. Hamas said the killer used a weapon with a silencer, allowing him to escape undetected before Faqha's body was discovered an hour later.

Hamas immediately accused Israel of killing him through collaborators and launched a manhunt. Israel had sentenced Faqha to nine terms of life imprisonment for directing deadly suicide bombing attacks. He was freed along with more than 1,000 other Palestinian prisoners in exchange for a single Israeli soldier in 2011.

Hamas has put to death 25 people sentenced under its judicial system since 2007 when it took over Gaza in bloody street battles from forces loyal to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Hamas also killed 23 people without trials during its 2014 war with Israel. Rights groups have questioned the fairness of trials under the Hamas system. Human Rights Watch condemned the executions in a statement.

"Rushing to put men to death based on an unreviewable decision of a special military court days after announcing their arrests and airing videoed confessions smacks of militia rule, not the rule of law," Sarah Leah Whitson, HRW's Middle East director, said. "Reliance on confessions, in a system where coercion, torture and deprivation of detainee's rights are prevalent, and other apparent due process violations further taint the court's verdicts. Death as government-sanctioned punishment is inherently cruel and always wrong, no matter the circumstance." After Faqha's killing, Hamas set up checkpoints throughout Gaza and barred all residents and foreign aid workers from leaving the coastal strip and going to Israel. It has since eased some of the restrictions. — AP

SALMAN ABEDI: YOUNG, ANGRY MAN THIRSTING FOR REVENGE

'ISOLATED, QUIET, RESERVED INDIVIDUAL'

MANCHESTER: Manchester suicide bomber Salman Abedi was a British-born university dropout with Libyan jihadi links who, according to his sister, may have sought revenge for the deaths of Muslim children. Abedi was named by British authorities the day after he detonated a bomb packed with nuts and screws at the Manchester Arena, killing 22 people and maiming dozens more at a concert by US pop star Ariana Grande. Born in Britain to a devoutly Muslim Libyan family, Abedi was an "isolated, quiet, reserved individual" according to Mohamed Fadil, a spokesman for the Libyan community in Manchester.

"Even when he came to mosque, he just kept to himself and quickly left. His friends are not in the Libyan community," Fadil told AFP, adding that locals said Abedi had a history of drinking and smoking cannabis. Abdullah Muhsin Norris, 70, told Sky News that Abedi was ejected from his mosque in Moss Side two months ago after he had tried to hide in the mosque library to read religious books overnight.

"I was very annoyed with him," Norris said, adding that worshippers at his mosque were forbidden to engage in conversations or preaching about politics. But the image of the awkward misfit stands in contrast to the picture which has emerged of the suicide bomber in recent days in British media of a man with links both to Islamist fighters in Libya and an Islamic State group recruiter. The Wall Street Journal cited a family friend saying that Abedi had travelled to Libya with his father in 2011 to join the Tripoli Brigade militia as it battled the regime of Libyan dictator Moamer Kadhafi. He returned to Britain in 2014 with his mother, the friend said. Abedi was known to British intelligence services, interior minister Amber Rudd said this week, without giving further details.

Islamic State link

French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said Abedi had "likely" been to Syria after Libya, citing information provided by British intelligence services to their counterparts in Paris. "In any case, the links with Daesh are proven," Collomb said, using another term for the Islamic State jihadist group which claimed responsibility for the Manchester



A photo released on the Facebook page of Libya's Ministry of Interior's Special Deterrence Force on May 24, 2017 claims to show Hashem Abedi, the brother of the man suspected of carrying out the bombing in the British city of Manchester, after he was detained in Tripoli for alleged links to the Islamic State (IS) group. — AFP

Arena attack. Links have also emerged between Abedi and a Manchester terror cell, according to counter-terrorism sources cited by Sky News television. Investigators found a "significant" link between Abedi and Raphael Hostey, a young fellow Mancunian who allegedly recruited IS members before reportedly being killed in a drone strike in Syria last year.

Sky News said the two Islamists worshipped at Didsbury Mosque in the leafy Manchester suburbs, where trustees on Wednesday decried the "horrific atrocity" at the arena and denied any links to extremism. Abedi's father Ramadan had sometimes performed the call to prayer at the mosque and his brother Ismael had been a volunteer. However, Mohammed Saeed, a senior figure from the mosque, told The Guardian newspaper that when he once gave a sermon denouncing terror, Abedi stared him down. "Salman showed me a face of hate after that sermon," Mohammed Saeed said of the 2015 encounter. "He was showing me hatred."

'He wanted revenge'

Libya arrested Abedi's father Ramadan and younger brother Hashem, who was also born in Britain, a relative

and security sources said on Wednesday. Ahmed bin Salem, a spokesman for the Deterrence Force, which supports Libya's UN-backed unity government, said Hashem Abedi was aware of his brother's attack plan and both were members of IS. The relative said Salman had travelled to Manchester from Libya four days before the bombing.

"His father wanted his son to stay in Libya but Salman insisted on going to Manchester." While the precise details of when and how Salman Abedi decided to turn to violent extremism remain unknown, his sister said he was loving but driven by a desire for revenge. "I think he saw children-Muslim children-dying everywhere, and wanted revenge. He saw the explosives America drops on children in Syria, and he wanted revenge," said Jomana Abedi, quoted by The Wall Street Journal. Such anger was reportedly heightened when one of his friends, 18-year-old Abdul Wahab Hafidah, was murdered in the Moss Side area of Manchester a year ago. "I remember Salman at his funeral vowing revenge," the family friend told the Journal. Before carrying out the deadly attack at Manchester Arena, Abedi had joined Manchester's huge student population. — AFP

RUSSIA HOLDS 4 OVER IS PLOT AGAINST MOSCOW

MOSCOW: Russia's security service yesterday said it had uncovered an alleged bomb-making laboratory in Moscow as officers detained four suspected Islamic State group members plotting "terror attacks" on public transport. The FSB said those held included citizens of Russia and ex-Soviet Central Asia who were "preparing terror attacks with the

use of homemade explosives on Moscow's transport infrastructure." "As a result of searches at the detainees' places of residence a laboratory for making explosives was discovered and a ready-made explosive device," the agency said in a statement.

The alleged terror cell was directed by IS leadership in Syria and

the suspects planned to flee there after the planned attacks to fight for the extremist group, it added. The detentions are the latest in a broad security sweep as Russia remains on heightened alert after a suicide attack on the Saint Petersburg metro that killed 15 people in April. —AFP



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MANCHESTER: People look at tributes in a square in central Manchester ahead of a minute's silence for the victims of the suicide attack at an Ariana Grande concert that left more than 20 people dead and many more injured, as it ended on Monday night at the Manchester Arena. —AP

US LEAKS OVER MANCHESTER TEST 'SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP'

STEMMING A TIDE OF DAMAGING LEAKS

LONDON: US leaks about the British investigation into the Manchester bomber have strained the two countries' "special relationship" and thrown into doubt the sharing of information among the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance. Greater Manchester Police are trying to establish who made the bomb detonated by 22-year old Islamist terrorist Salman Abedi on Monday, killing 22, but they have reportedly stopped sharing intelligence information with US law enforcement agencies after key details were leaked to newspapers.

British Prime Minister Theresa May vowed to confront US President Donald Trump when the pair meet at the NATO meeting in Brussels, with the American leader already struggling domestically to stem a tide of damaging leaks from law enforcement agencies. May said she would "make clear to President Trump that intelligence which is shared between our law enforcement agencies must remain secure", after key details of the investigation were published in US media, including the New York Times.

Her Downing Street office insisted that any decision to stop sharing intelligence on the case was "an operational matter for police," and it was reported that general intelligence sharing was still ongoing. A Foreign Office source told the domestic Press Agency that the gov-

ernment was "furious" with the leaks. May was the first foreign leader to visit Trump's White House, underlining the importance of the so-called "special relationship" between the two countries.

The two countries are also members of the "Five Eyes" intelligence alliance, along with Australia, New Zealand and Canada, highlighting the seriousness of the row. Experts warned the leaks could hinder collaboration. "It damages decades of confidence between the UK and US services, the cohesion of the "Five Eyes" group, and sharing of information with French, German and other security services," said former reviewer of terrorism legislation Alex Carlile. "These leaks made yesterday a very bad day for national security in several countries, and those responsible should be called to account."

Leaks cause of 'much distress'

Former British intelligence officer Ben Owen told the BBC that the US could respond by withholding information from British officials, and urged a solution. "It is critical that this is fixed, we need to go back to the drawing board, it's happening far too often." British interior minister Amber Rudd on Wednesday said it was "irritating" that US media outlets named the bomber despite a British authorities request not to, adding she had "been very clear with our

friends that it should not happen again." But just hours later, the New York Times published forensic photographs showing components of the bomber's device strewn across the foyer of the Manchester Arena, enraging British politicians, intelligence agencies and police. European allies were also accused of releasing secret information after French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb revealed, before British authorities, that the suspect was of Libyan descent, had recently likely travelled to Syria and that he had proven links with Islamic State.

Ian Blair, former Metropolitan police commissioner, said that foreign leaks of intelligence were not a new phenomenon. "I'm afraid this reminds me exactly of what happened after 7/7 when the US published a complete picture of the way the bombs had been made up. We had the same protests," he told BBC Radio 4. Greater Manchester Police chief constable Ian Hopkins stated that the leaks had had an immediate human impact, as well as damaging intelligence links. "Last night, the family liaison officers shared with them the fact that intelligence had been leaked and published in the New York Times," he said. "It is absolutely understandable that this has caused much distress for families that are already suffering terribly with their loss." —AFP

GERMAN POLICE: CONCERT BOMBER PASSED AIRPORT

BERLIN: The suspected bomber in the concert attack in Britain passed through a German airport before the attack, police said yesterday. Salman Abedi spent only a short time at Duesseldorf airport's transit area four days before the bombing at Manchester Arena, Duesseldorf police said, confirming an earlier report in German magazine Focus.

"According to the current state of the investigations, the suspect transferred in Duesseldorf on his travels to Manchester. Therefore he spent a short time in the transit area," police said in a statement. Police didn't provide any further information or say where Abedi was coming from when he landed in Duesseldorf. Focus magazine, citing unnamed federal security sources, had earlier reported that British-born Abedi twice flew from a German airport in recent years and that he wasn't on any international watch list.

A German security official told The Associated Press yesterday the report was accurate. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the information hadn't been cleared for public release. Focus reported that Abedi previously flew from Frankfurt to Britain in 2015. The magazine also wrote that German authorities are trying to determine whether Abedi had contact with Islamic extremists in Germany. The report said that British police informed their German counterparts that Abedi had received paramilitary training in Syria beforehand.

MIGRATION TO BRITAIN FALLS

LONDON: Net migration to Britain fell to its lowest level in more than two-and-a-half-years in 2016, official data showed yesterday, driven in part by an increase in the number of European Union citizens leaving the country. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said net migration to Britain in the year to December 2016 was 248,000, down 84,000 on the previous year and the lowest estimated level since the year to March 2014.

Concerns about immigration played a big role in Britain's vote in last June's referendum to leave the EU. The government has repeatedly failed to meet a pledge to reduce the net annual level to below 100,000. Prime Minister Theresa May's ruling Conservatives, who are expected to win a June 8 national election, have repeated that promise, and have also said Britain must be able to control the number of people who come from the EU after Brexit.

The ONS said last year's drop in net migration was driven by both a statistically significant rise in the number of people leaving Britain, mainly EU citizens, and a non-statistically significant fall in the number of people arriving in Britain. Net migration of EU citizens fell 51,000 year-on-year to 133,000, it said, driven by a decrease in the number of citizens from the so-called EU8 countries—the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. The ONS said net migration for those eight countries fell by 41,000 to 5,000, the smallest estimate recorded since they joined the EU in 2004. —Reuters

MELANIA FACTOR BOOSTS TOURISM IN SLOVENIA

LJUBLJANA: The number of tourists in Slovenia rose by 8 percent year-on-year in March, boosted by the fact that new US First Lady Melania Trump was born in the country. Overnight stays in Slovenia by tourists from the United States jumped 30.6 percent while the number of domestic tourists rose by 22.5 percent, the statistics office said yesterday. Analysts said domestic tourist figures reflected improved economic conditions in Slovenia, a country which narrowly avoided an international bailout for its banks in 2013 but expects economic growth of 3.6 percent this year versus 2.5 percent in 2016. The unemployment rate fell to 10.2 percent in March, down from 12 percent in the same month last year. The statistics office also said business sentiment in May reached 9.5 points, lower than in April but 5.7 points higher than a year ago, mainly due to improved confidence among consumers and in the service sector. —Reuters

GOP CANDIDATE CHARGED FOR ASSAULT ON REPORTER

BOZEMAN: The Republican candidate in the nationally-watched election for Montana's sole congressional seat has been charged with misdemeanor assault for allegedly grabbing a reporter by the neck and throwing him to the ground. Voters decide in the special election whether Republican Greg Gianforte or Democrat Rob Quist will fill the US House seat left vacant when Ryan Zinke resigned to join President Donald Trump's Cabinet as secretary of the Interior Department. Gianforte, who has tried to align himself with Trump, defended himself as the criminal charge was announced Wednesday, saying the reporter was being aggressive and grabbed him by the wrist in their exchange at his campaign office.

Quist has declined to comment on the charge. The assault charge is a last-minute curveball in Thursday's race, which was partly seen as a referendum on Trump's presidency. The majority of voters were expected to have already cast ballots through early voting, and it was unclear how much of an effect the assault charge would have on the election results.

Gallatin County Sheriff Brian Gootkin made the announcement shortly before midnight Wednesday in a written statement, about six hours after the attack on reporter Ben Jacobs of The Guardian. Gianforte would face a maximum \$500 fine or 6 months in jail if convicted. The statement added that Jacobs' injuries did not meet the legal definition of felony assault.

Astonishment

Gianforte was in a private office preparing for an interview with Fox News when Jacobs came in without permission, campaign spokesman Shane Scanlon said. The Fox News crew watched in astonishment as, after Jacobs pressed him on the GOP health care bill, "Gianforte grabbed Jacobs by the neck with both hands and slammed him into the ground behind him," Fox News reporter Alicia Acuna wrote in an article. She added that Gianforte then began to punch Jacobs.

In an audio recording posted by The Guardian, the reporter asks the congressional candidate about the GOP's health care bill, which was just evaluated hours earlier by the Congressional Budget Office. "We'll talk to you about that later," Gianforte says on the recording, referring Jacobs to a spokesman. When Jacobs says that there won't be time, Gianforte says "Just—and there is a crashing sound. Gianforte yells, "The last guy who came here did the same thing," and a shaken-sounded Jacobs tells the candidate he just body-slammed him. "Get the hell out of here," Gianforte says.

The Gianforte campaign Wednesday night released a statement blaming the incident on Jacobs. It contends he "aggressively shoved a recorder in Greg's face and began asking badgering questions" before being asked to leave. Gianforte asked Jacobs to lower a phone that was being used as an audio recorder, then tried to grab it, the campaign said in a statement. Jacobs then grabbed Gianforte's wrist and both fell to the ground, Scanlon said.

Claims questioned

The 45-second recording does not contain a request from Gianforte that Jacobs lower his phone. Acuna, the Fox News reporter, wrote that "at no point did any of us who witnessed this assault see Jacobs show any form of physical aggression toward Gianforte." The sheriff's office said Gianforte has until June 7 to appear in court on the charge. Jacobs told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Thursday that he never touched Gianforte.

He said of the politician's account "The only thing that is factually correct ... is my name and place of employment." Gianforte, a wealthy businessman, lost a race against Montana's Democratic governor in November while Trump won the state by 20 points. In the congressional race, Gianforte has been boosted by visits from Vice President Mike Pence and Donald Trump, Jr.

Hours before Wednesday's assault, the Gianforte campaign sent out a last-minute fundraising appeal to its supporters, saying the outcome "will determine whether we pass Donald Trump's America First agenda or if the fake news media and the national Democrats will win, keeping Obama's reckless policies in place." Democrats were hoping an upset would send a message to the GOP that Trump's souring approval ratings could damage their political fortunes even in deep red states. — AP



BRASILIA: A protester stands in front of a line of riot police during the protest "Occupy Brasilia" against the labor and social security reforms and the government of President Michel Temer. — AFP

BRAZIL PRESIDENT REVOKES ORDER DEPLOYING TROOPS IN BRASILIA

TWO MINISTRIES SET ON FIRE, 49 PEOPLE INJURED

BRASILIA: President Michel Temer yesterday revoked an order to deploy the military in Brazil's capital in the wake of clashes between police and protesters demanding his resignation. Two ministries were set on fire and 49 people were injured during Wednesday's clashes and Temer ordered 1,500 troops to restore order. But yesterday he revoked the order in a decree published in the Official Diary that said violence had ceased and order had been restored.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators were in the streets of Brasilia on Wednesday to demand Temer resign amid allegations he approved of paying hush money to a jailed former lawmaker. What began as small scuffles between police and protesters who tried to jump a cordon mushroomed into a series of confrontations in which officers fired tear gas and pepper spray to contain the crowd. A fire broke out in the Ministry of Agriculture, and protesters broke windows and doors at other ministries.

Unusual procedures

Local media captured video images of military police firing pistols into the air. The Secretariat of Public Security issued a statement late Wednesday saying it would investigate the weapons firing, saying that "this procedure is not used in protests." Earlier, it said one person had been injured by a bullet but give no information on who fired the shot.

Some government agencies were evacuated because of the violence, the president's office said. In a brief national address during the unrest, Defense Minister Raul Jungmann said troops were being sent to guard the presidential palace and other federal buildings. The weeklong deployment was authorized by a presidential decree that left open the possibility that soldiers could be used more widely in Brasilia.

Late Wednesday, Temer's office issued a statement defending the order as necessary because the violence put the lives and safety of public servants at risk. It said the president had determined that using the country's National Force, an elite police entity, would not have been sufficient. "When order is re-established, the decree will be revoked," the statement said. "The president of the republic underscores that he will not hesitate to exercise the authority given to his office whenever it is necessary."

Temer is struggling to retain power after the release of a recording that appears to capture him approving hush money for a convicted former lawmaker. Brazil's top court is investigating him for alleged obstruction of justice and involvement in passive corruption. The president has denied wrongdoing and insists he will not resign. His unusual decision to call in the military could heighten anger against the government if it is seen as the last gasp of a president trying to maintain power with the use of force.

Politically isolated

"This decree was never used in this context to protect an administration that is politically isolated," said Newton de Oliveira, a professor and security specialist at Mackenzie University in Rio. After the announcement that troops were taking up positions in the capital, some senior officials began distancing themselves from the decision.

"If this government cannot hold itself up, the armed forces will not hold up this government," said Sen Renan Calheiros, who is the whip for Temer's party in the upper house but has increasingly challenged the president. Sen Romero Juca, a Temer ally, defended the president's decision. "President Temer brought in the armed forces because a bunch of criminals were setting ministries on fire," he said. With Brazil deeply divided and a political crisis deepening, sessions in both houses of Congress became chaotic as lawmakers shouted one another down.

While Congress debated, 35,000 people were marching toward the legislative building, shouting "Out with Temer!" and carrying signs calling for an immediate direct presidential election. If Temer should resign, Brazil's constitution says Congress would elect the next president, who would hold power for the rest of his term, which runs to the end of 2018. But many Brazilians, disgusted with the political class, want to vote themselves. — AP

BODIES OF EVEREST CLIMBERS NOT FROM 2017

KATHMANDU: Nepal said yesterday that four bodies found in tents at the highest camp on Mount Everest were not of mountaineers from this year's climbing season. Nepali sherpas said they had seen the bodies in two tents on the South Col, at 8,000 meters and a newspaper quoted the sherpas as saying that two were foreigners. But two days after the discovery, Nepal's tourism department said it had checked with all the expeditions on the world's highest mountain and none had reported any of their climbers missing. "I can categorically confirm

that these bodies are not of the climbers from the current session," Durga Dutta Dhakal, a director at the tourism department in charge of climbing, said.

The conflicting information has renewed calls for better tracking of people on the mountain as well as screening of climbers and their guides to ensure that only people with experience attempt the 8,850 meter summit. Dhakal said so far five climbers had died while attempting Everest from the Nepali side during the current season, in addition to one climbing the Chinese

route. "No one (else) has gone missing. But I am not in a position to confirm the identity of these climbers, which team they belonged to and which year they died," he said. More than 5,000 climbers have scaled Mount Everest since it was first climbed by New Zealander Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay in 1953. Nearly 300 mountaineers have died. Many of the victims remain on the mountain, entombed in snow, as it is too difficult to bring their bodies down.

Mingma Sherpa, the head of the Seven Summit Treks group whose sher-

pas found the four bodies while they were on their way to retrieve the body of a Slovak climber, said he had only reported what his men found. "I disclosed what our rescuers saw at Camp Four on Wednesday. I have no details about their nationalities, or circumstances leading to their deaths. It now appears that the bodies could be of those climbers who died during old expeditions." Nepal has issued permits to 371 foreign climbers this season, up from last year's 281, at \$11,000 apiece, a major source of income for the cash-strapped country.— Reuters

150 ARRESTED FROM MODI'S PARTY IN KOLKATA CLASHES

KOLKATA: Indian police arrested around 150 people protesting against a breakdown in law and order in the eastern city of Kolkata yesterday, after street battles broke out during a march to police headquarters and police cars were set ablaze. Regional and national leaders from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) staged the march to protest against a perceived deterioration in security in the state of West Bengal, which is ruled by a rival left-wing party.

West Bengal, with a population of nearly 100 million, has a long history of political violence. Modi's BJP is seeking to make political gains in the state, where the Trinamool Congress of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee won re-election in 2016. Clashes broke out after thousands of protesters, marching along three routes, found their way barricaded by police. Police staged baton charges, fired tear gas and deployed water cannon in an attempt to disperse crowds. Crude bombs were thrown by protesters from the BJP, said Vineet Goyal, Joint Commissioner of Kolkata Police.

These setoff smoke but did not cause damage or injuries, according to witnesses, while protesters overturned and set ablaze police vehicles. Senior police officials said about 150 BJP workers and leaders had been taken into custody, among them Kailash Vijayvargiya, a general secretary of the BJP who heads the party organization in West Bengal. Several officers were injured. In a series of tweets, Vijayvargiya accused the police of carrying out "brutal" baton charges on protesters.—Reuters



NEW DELHI: Uzma touches the feet of Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj as a mark of respect and gratitude upon her return to India. — AP

WOMAN FORCED TO MARRY PAKISTANI RETURNS HOME

NATIONAL RALLYING CRY AGAINST ARCH-RIVAL PAKISTAN

NEW DELHI: An Indian woman who said she was forced to marry a Pakistani at gunpoint returned to India yesterday after a court ordered her release. Uzma Ahmad was reunited with her family at the Wagah border crossing near Amritsar in northern Punjab state before heading to New Delhi where she called on Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj. The case became a national rallying cry against arch-rival Pakistan with Swaraj calling Ahmad "India's daughter" and leaving no stone unturned for her release. "I want to thank the foreign ministry and the home ministry of Pakistan. If Uzma is with us today, they have a role too," Swaraj told reporters in Delhi in a rare display of amity between the foes.

Ahmad, who is in her early 20s, met Pakistani Tahir Ali in Malaysia, according

to Indian media. she told the Islamabad high court that Ali forced her to marry him at gunpoint on May 3 when she was visiting Pakistan. Ahmad has made headlines in India since making her plea to the court on May 12 to be allowed to return. Her allegations emerged as tensions mounted between India and Pakistan over the disputed Kashmir region and the case of an Indian national, Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was sentenced to death in Pakistan on spying charges.

"I have been really lucky"

Ahmad had been staying at the Indian mission in Islamabad since making the accusation. The Islamabad court ordered Ali to return the woman's immigration documents so she could leave. Ahmad fought back tears as she recalled

Swaraj ringing to assure her everything was being done to bring her home. "For the first time I felt as if my life too has a value," Ahmad said after touching Swaraj's feet, a traditional gesture of respect in India. "I have been really lucky as there are many girls over there who are abused and harassed but they are not able to get out."

In 2015, a deaf and mute Indian girl returned to India after more than 10 years trapped in Pakistan. Relations between India and Pakistan have plummeted since a deadly attack on an Indian army base in the disputed region of Kashmir in September, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed. There have since been repeated outbreaks of cross-border firing, with both sides reporting deaths and injuries.—AFP

CHINA URGES JAPAN TO BE CAUTIOUS OVER DEFENSES

BEIJING: China yesterday urged Japan to act cautiously after government and defense industry sources in Tokyo said US and Japanese companies are collaborating on new missile defense radars. As nuclear-armed Pyongyang builds ever more advanced missiles with the ability to strike anywhere in Japan, Tokyo is likely to fund a ground version of the ship-based Aegis defense system deployed on warships in the Sea of Japan, sources told Reuters.

Speaking at a regular monthly news briefing, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang said the issue of anti-missile defenses was a matter of strategic stability and trust between countries and should be cautiously handled. "Especially because of historical reasons, relevant moves by Japan in the military and security field have always attracted close attention from its Asian neighbors and the international community," Ren said. "Japan should act cautiously on the anti-missile issue," he added, without elaborating.

Ties between China and Japan, the world's second- and third-largest economies, have been plagued with a territorial dispute over a group of tiny East China Sea islets and the legacy of Japan's wartime aggression. China has also strongly objected to the United States' deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) anti-missile system in South Korea, saying its powerful radar could look into China and affect Chinese security. Washington and Seoul say THAAD is purely to help defend against North Korean missiles. — Reuters

CHINA CONDEMNS COUPLE'S KIDNAPPING IN PAKISTAN

BEIJING: China condemned yesterday the armed kidnapping of a Chinese couple in Pakistan, after the abduction raised safety concerns for Beijing's multi-billion dollar investments in the country. "The Chinese government attaches high importance to the safety of Chinese citizens overseas," foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said during a regular press briefing. "We condemn all forms of kidnapping activities," Lu said, adding that the government was working closely with Pakistani authorities to ensure their release.

The abduction happened Wednesday afternoon in Quetta, the

capital of the southwestern province of Baluchistan, which is at the heart of the \$50-billion China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project but is racked by separatist and Islamist insurgencies. "They were dragged into a vehicle without number plates by three unknown men," senior local police official Aitzaz Goraya told AFP.

One Chinese woman managed to escape as the men began firing in the air to scare off onlookers. A passer-by, Muhammad Zahir, was shot as he tried to prevent the abduction. He told AFP he saw three men forcing a Chinese woman into a white car but she was

resisting and crying. "I stopped to observe the situation but they had forced the woman in the car by then and were pushing the man. "So I rushed to them and asked what they were doing. One of them said, 'We are from the crime branch of the police and we are taking them for investigation' and I told them that they should not misbehave with people. Then the driver came out and shot me in my leg," the 35-year-old said.

China's deputy chief of mission in Islamabad, Zhao Lijian, said the kidnapped pair had been studying Urdu at a language centre. Local police had ear-

lier said they were teaching Chinese. China is ramping up investment in Pakistan as part of a plan unveiled in 2015 that will link its far-western Xinjiang region to Gwadar port in Baluchistan with a series of infrastructure, power and transport upgrades.

Mineral-rich Baluchistan has been plagued by Islamist and separatist insurgencies since 2004, with hundreds of soldiers and militants killed in the fighting. A greater push towards peace and development by Pakistani authorities, including with CPEC, has reduced the violence considerably in recent years. — AFP

INDIAN DISTRICT BLOCKS INTERNET

NEW DELHI: Authorities in north India have blocked mobile internet services, arrested 24 people and suspended senior officials after clashes between castes that have left two dead and at least 20 injured, police said yesterday. Police said they had blocked access to mobile messaging services to stop "outsiders" from instigating the violence between Dalits and members of a higher caste community in Uttar Pradesh state's Saharanpur district, which lies just 120 miles from New Delhi.

"We ordered the service providers late Wednesday to suspend internet services as outsiders... were instigating locals with WhatsApp and Facebook posts," senior police officer Bablu Kumar told AFP. "We have arrested 24 persons and have a massive force presence on the ground. Now the situation is absolutely calm." It is not clear why violence first broke out earlier this month. Some reports have said a group of Dalits-India's lowest caste, formerly known as untouchables—were unhappy about loud music being played during a procession by higher-caste Thakurs.

Since then Dalits have alleged harassment by the upper-caste men, who they say prevented them from installing a statue of low-caste hero BR Ambedkar on the premises of a local temple. The latest round of caste clashes broke out when a Dalit man was killed while returning from a political rally earlier this week. On Wednesday an upper caste man was shot and seriously wounded.

Authorities in Uttar Pradesh have since suspended the district police chief and other local officials. The state's controversial chief minister Yogi Adityanath, a hardline Hindu nationalist, tweeted that those responsible would face "strict action". "I appeal to people of the state to not pay attention to provocative statements," he also tweeted. The violence is an embarrassment for India's nationally ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which won a landslide election victory in Uttar Pradesh in March on a promise to restore law and order. Senior police officials say they expect to make more arrests over the recent violence, which included arson attacks. Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state and has been the scene of some of the country's worst communal violence. — AFP

S KOREA RAPE VICTIM NAVY OFFICER COMMITS SUICIDE

SEOUL: A South Korean female naval officer apparently killed herself after being allegedly raped by a senior colleague, a defence ministry spokesman said yesterday. The victim, a lieutenant, was found dead in her single-room apartment on Wednesday, where a message was found reading: "Tomorrow, I won't be in this world any longer." "The lieutenant appeared to have committed suicide," a military spokesman told AFP.

She had reportedly told her boyfriend that she had been raped. Military police have arrested a navy captain as a suspect. He admitted to having sex with her but denied the rape allegation, the spokesman said. Human rights activists say cases of sexual violence within the military occur persistently despite government efforts to curb them. "This appears to be a typical case in which a male superior abused his power to violate a female subordinate," Bang Hye-Lim at the Military Human Rights Centre told AFP. "It is not rare at all that male chauvinism translates into sex crimes in the military", she said. — AFP



MARAWI: Armored Personnel Carriers make their way through a queue of vehicles with fleeing residents that stretches for miles as Muslim militants lay siege. — AP

HOW A BOTCHED RAID LED TO MARTIAL LAW IN PHILIPPINES

MARAWI: It was meant to be a "surgical operation" to capture one of the world's most wanted terrorists, who was hiding and wounded in a southern Philippine city. But it went spectacularly wrong. Three days later Marawi, the centre of Islam in the mainly Catholic nation was swarmed by tanks, attack helicopters and thousands of troops fighting Islamic State-linked fighters holed up in homes and buildings.

President Rodrigo Duterte had also declared martial law across the southern third of the country to quell the crisis, while many of the 200,000 residents had fled... and security forces had lost their target: Isnilon Hapilon. Forces had initially been confident they would capture or kill the elusive Hapilon, regarded by the United States as one of the world's most dangerous terrorists. The US government offers a \$5-million bounty for his capture.

The military had for months been conducting offensives against Islamist militants in nearby mountains, and came close to killing Hapilon during a bombing raid in January. After receiving intelligence that he had come to Marawi for medical treatment and was hiding in a house, a small group of security forces conducted what two military spokespeople described as a "surgical operation" to get him.

But, even though the region is a known hotbed of Islamist militants, the troops were taken by surprise when

dozens of gunmen emerged to defend Hapilon, then go on a deadly rampage throughout the city. "We had been pumeling them in the mountains, but were caught unaware when they entered Marawi," Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana conceded in a briefing to reporters on Wednesday.

Compounding the problem was the support for the gunmen from locals, connected by clan ties. "The problem here is they have a lot of relatives inside Marawi city," Lorenzana said. Five soldiers, two policemen and 13 militants have died in the ensuing clashes, according to authorities, with up to 40 gunmen still believed to be hiding in the city holding a priest and other people abducted from a Church as human shields. If Hapilon does escape, it would be a huge blow for the Philippine authorities in their efforts to stamp out what Duterte has said is a fast-rising threat from the Islamic State group.

IS linchpin

The government and security analysts consider him the linchpin of an effort to unite various small Muslim armed groups in the country's lawless south and neighboring countries under the black IS flag. Hapilon, 51, initially gained notoriety as leader of the Abu Sayyaf, a US-listed terrorist organization that was founded with seed money from Al-Qaeda in the early 1990s.

The Abu Sayyaf, based on remote,

Muslim-populated islands in the far south of the Philippines, has earned many millions of dollars by kidnapping hundreds of Filipinos and foreigners, and demanding ransoms. In 2001 he helped lead the abduction from a western Philippine resort island of a group of local and foreign tourists. Two American hostages eventually died, one of whom was beheaded.

The Abu Sayyaf is also blamed for the Philippines' deadliest terror attacks, including the 2004 bombing of a ferry in Manila that claimed 116 lives. In mid-2014 Hapilon, an engineering graduate from the University of the Philippines, showed up in a YouTube video as one of the first Islamist militant leaders in the Philippines to pledge allegiance to IS.

Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict director Sidney Jones, an expert on Asian jihadist movements, said Hapilon was endorsed by the IS as its "amir", or top leader for Southeast Asia. Lorenzana said IS leaders in the Middle East had ordered Hapilon to move off his tiny island base of Basilan and into more populated areas of the southern Philippines near Marawi "to increase the mass base" of IS.

Hapilon's escape on Tuesday has had broader implications than IS's prospects in the Philippines, with Duterte citing the ensuing violence as justification to declare martial law over Mindanao and threaten military rule for the rest of the country. — AFP



US sailors receive a safety brief on the Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey prior to a replenishment-at-sea on May 6, 2017, in the South China Sea. — AFP

CHINA CONDEMNS US AFTER WARSHIP SAILS NEAR SOUTH CHINA SEA REEF

‘LIKELY TO CAUSE UNEXPECTED SEA AND AIR ACCIDENTS’

BEIJING: China yesterday accused the US of trespassing after an American warship sailed near a reef claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea, the first such operation by President Donald Trump's administration in the disputed waterway. The row comes during a period of warming relations between the countries with Trump saying that Washington has dialed down pressure on Beijing over other issues in hopes of securing their cooperation on North Korea.

The guided-missile destroyer USS Dewey entered the area “without permission from the Chinese government”, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters at a regular press briefing, adding that the ship had “trespassed in the waters near the relevant islands and reefs”. “The relevant action taken by the US vessel undermines China's sovereignty and security interests, and is very likely to cause unexpected sea and air accidents,” he said, urging Washington to stop “provocative actions”.

Artificial islands

The USS Dewey sailed less than 12 nautical miles from Mischief Reef—part of the Spratly Islands—yesterday morning local time, a US official said earlier, the first freedom of navigation operation under Trump. The UN says nations can establish the breadth of their territorial sea up to a limit of 12 nautical miles. China claims nearly all of the South China Sea, despite partial counter-claims from Taiwan and several

Southeast Asian nations including the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Vietnam.

It has rapidly built reefs into artificial islands capable of hosting military planes. The US has challenged annexations of these islets and advocated for a diplomatic settlement to the disputes. Speaking earlier in the day, Pentagon spokesman, Major Jamie Davis, said US forces operate in the South China Sea on a daily basis and will fly and sail “wherever international law” allows.

“We have a comprehensive Freedom of Navigation Operations program that seeks to challenge excessive maritime claims in order to preserve the rights, freedoms, and uses of the sea and airspace guaranteed to all nations under international law,” Davis said in a statement to AFP. The exercises are “not about any one country, nor are they about making political statements,” he added.

The US operation came a week after the Pentagon said that Chinese jets conducted an “unprofessional” intercept of a US radiation sniffing plane. China denied the accusation, with the Ministry of Defense saying yesterday that “the close reconnaissance activities conducted by US military ships and planes towards China are the root cause of the security issues between China and the US over the sea and in the air.”

‘Severe disruptions’

Relations between Washington and Beijing had warmed in recent months,

with Trump trading his once fierce rhetoric about the country for glowing compliments. Since meeting with President Xi Jinping in April, Trump, who once accused China of “raping” the US, has praised its leader as a “good man”, saying it would be inappropriate to pressure Beijing while Washington is seeking its help with North Korea.

Yesterday's operation may be an indication that Trump's patience is wearing thin. But James Char, a China analyst at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, said the maneuver was just the US signaling that it is a “credible strategic guarantor to its allies” in the region. “For now, I do not see this as a sign marking the end of the goodwill cultivated between Trump and Xi,” Char told AFP. Washington has long argued that Beijing's actions in the South China Sea threaten freedom of navigation and over-flight through the strategically vital waters.

China denies these claims, countering that the US is eager to stoke tensions in the region. Last week, Beijing and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) agreed on a framework for creating a new code of conduct for ships and aircraft operating in the region. “The situation in the South China Sea is cooling down and showing positive signs of development,” the foreign ministry spokesman said. “What the US has done is cause severe disruptions to this process of dialogue and consultation. It will bring itself no good while hurting others.” — AFP

JURY SHU OUT ON N KOREA LINK TO RANSOMWARE ATTACK

WASHINGTON: Was North Korea behind the ransomware epidemic that hit global computer networks earlier this month? That's the subject of heated debate in cybersecurity circles after analysts found similarities in the “WannaCry” worm to other malware attributed to North Korea, including the 2014 hack of Sony Pictures and a cyberheist of millions of dollars from the Bangladesh central bank. The security firm Symantec this week said the shared code makes it “highly likely” that the attacks were connected to the hacker group given the code name Lazarus, which many believe is North Korean.

Israel-based cybersecurity firm Intezer last week reached a similar conclusion, finding that WannaCry had “strong links to other malware families, believed to be developed by North Korean hackers, or known to be used in attacks against South Korean organizations.” Russian-based security firm Kaspersky Labs and others also pointed to a likely North Korean link.

While the evidence is not conclusive—hackers can often hide or “spoof” their real identities—North Korea is emerging as one of the likely suspects despite a strong denial by the Pyongyang envoy to the United Nations, some analysts say. Symantec researchers said that despite the likely North Korea link, the WannaCry attacks “do not bear the hallmarks of a nation-state campaign but are more typical of a cybercrime campaign.”

Desperate for cash

“I could easily see North Korea doing this as a way to get money,” said Paul Benda, a Pentagon and Department of Homeland Security official who is now chief technology officer at Global Security and Innovative Strategies, a Washington consultancy. “With the sanctions they are under they need cold hard cash.”

Other analysts have noted that sanctions squeezing Pyongyang may be prompting desperate actions to raise cash through various channels, including cybercrime. “While years of sanctions have isolated the Hermit Kingdom from much of the global financial system, North Korea may be seeking to fund the state's coffers through a widespread cybercrime campaign,” said FireEye analyst Luke McNamara in a recent post on the Lawfare blog. Paradoxically, he said, the effort to persuade and other nations to pressure North Korea may be encouraging further cyberattacks: “Pyongyang would be left with few options to compensate for lost income that it could ramp up as quickly as cybercrime.”

The attacks discovered last week caused havoc in global computer networks, affecting as many as 300,000 machines in 150 countries and disrupting governments and several industries. The hackers developed the virus to exploit a flaw exposed in leaked documents from the National Security Agency.

Inconsistencies

But despite the growing concerns over North Korea, some analysts say it's too soon to point the finger and cite inconsistencies with the Pyongyang connection. The WannaCry attack appeared unsophisticated: researchers were able to halt the spread with a \$10 purchase of a web domain that activated a “kill switch.”

And various estimates showed the “ransom” raised amounted to a paltry \$116,000 from 302 entities more than a week after computers were locked down. James Scott, a senior fellow at the Institute for Critical Infrastructure Technology, said WannaCry was “barely functional” and spread widely only because of the large number of networks and computers which failed to upgrade security and were vulnerable to the self-replicating “worm.”

The hackers known as Lazarus are a sophisticated cybermercenary group, Scott told AFP. “They use elaborate traps, obfuscation techniques and wipers to eliminate digital footprints. This (WannaCry) has none of that.” More likely, Scott said, is that the attacks were carried out by hackers from China's People's Liberation Army “moonlighting” in their spare time. Scott, who disputes the widely held belief that the Lazarus group is North Korean, said it is possible that Pyongyang has outsourced some of its cybercrime to these freelance Chinese hackers. — AFP

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Lifestyle

Disney's beloved 'Bambi,' still breaking hearts at 75

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US actress Elle Fanning poses as she arrives for the screening of the film 'The Beguiled' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

DISNEY'S BELOVED 'BAMBI,' STILL BREAKING HEARTS AT 75



Disney bewitched generations of children with its pioneering animated film, *Bambi*, which was released in August 1942.

A timeless tale of an adorable fawn and his forest pals, or the death of childhood innocence? Either way, and nearly 75 years on, Disney classic "Bambi" packs as powerful a punch as it ever has. The Walt Disney Company bewitched generations of children and children-at-heart with its pioneering animated film, released in August 1942, about a wide-eyed young deer and his doting mom.

But the shocking image of young Bambi curled up next to the doe after she is slain by hunters has become as iconic as any scene in cinema history, credited with opening up taboo conversations about death and helping youngsters cope with bereavement. It also kindled former Beatle Paul McCartney's interest in animal rights and has served as the template for every harrowing Disney death since, from Mufasa in "The Lion King" to Hiro's brother Tadashi in "Big Hero 6." "You're creating a sense of what life was like for these animals in the forest and loss was part of it," production designer Paul Felix told journalists at Walt Disney Animation Studios in Burbank, California. "To be honest about the vision you had for the film, you couldn't leave that out. It's just a question of how it's done, how you prepare an audience for something like that."

Horror movie?

Felix, who has been touching up the animation for a diamond anniversary Blu-ray and DVD version on sale in June, first saw *Bambi* as an adult and says the movie remains "deeply revered, a real touchstone" at Disney. "It's just a master class. It also had this most amazing use of color in it but I couldn't even think about that for, like, 10 more years because there was so much to be learned," he says. Even at Disney, "Bambi" was hardly alone in exploring childhood trauma, following the dead parents, murderous stepmothers and children-donkey transformations of "Dumbo," "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and "Pinocchio."

But "Bambi" often leads lists of the saddest moments in cinema, and even moved *Time* magazine to include the movie among its top 25 horror movies of all time, alongside "Frankenstein," "The Exorcist" and "Night of the Living Dead." In a departure from form, Walt Disney used real children to voice the young characters in what became and would remain the impresario's favorite of the company's groundbreaking animated films. Born in Depression-era Texas and raised in Memphis, Donnie Dunagan, now 82, was brought in to voice young Bambi after impressing with a role in "Son of

Frankenstein" (1939) opposite Boris Karloff. It proved to be his fifth and final credited role and, by the age of 13, he was earning a full time living as a lathe operator before enlisting as a Marine and becoming a war hero.

'Good eye contact'

Dunagan remembers the company-and Walt Disney himself-as lacking in the pomposity the young star had seen at other studios during his short film career. "I didn't know he was the captain of the whole thing. He was a worker, he was all over the place, helping, pitching in, a very keen personality, good eye contact all the time," Dunagan told AFP. Peter Behn, also 82, was four when he went for the part of Bambi. He didn't get it due to what Disney describes as an "overly rambunctious" voice but was instead offered the role of the deer's playful rabbit companion Thumper. — AFP

Nour Al-Ta'i, a 15-year-old blind resident of East Mosul and participant in "Al-Ghad Star", a radio talent contest organized by the Al-Ghad studio based in the city of Erbil, sits in her room with her family at their home in Mosul. — AFP photos



Iraq radio show finds talent amid rubble of Mosul

It's a radio talent contest with a mission: showcasing the skills of Mosul's youth after years of jihadist rule and a months-long battle for the city. The recorded lyrics of competitor MC Rico, a rapper from Iraq's second city, filled the studio of Al-Ghad-Arabic for "tomorrow". "We saw a lot of horrors when we were young. I wish I hadn't grown up, because when we grew up, we saw even worse." The three judges in the Al-Ghad Star contest concentrated hard on the music, nodded their heads and took notes.

"This kind of song makes me think Mosul can bounce back," one said. MC Rico is one of 93 competitors in the contest, all aged between 15 and 25. He is one of the six who made it through to last Saturday evening's semi-final. Mosul residents set up Al-Ghad after fleeing the city, which the



Nour Al-Ta'i stands in a street.



Nour Al-Ta'i sits in her room listening to the radio at her home.

Islamic State group seized in 2014 and turned into a key hub in its cross-border "caliphate". With a base in Arbil, the capital of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, the radio has proved a hit back in Mosul, 80 kilometers (50 miles) to the west, where Iraqi forces have been battling since October to oust the jihadist group.

The talent show gave young listeners a chance to take to the airwaves themselves, singing classic Arabic songs or commenting on football matches. One participant even whispered poetry down the phone from western Mosul, keeping his voice down to avoid being heard by the jihadists who still control his neighborhood. "They don't want to become celebrities, they just want to express themselves, share what's inside them," said the show's director, who goes by the pseudonym Raad Al-Moslawi.

Murad Khan, a radio presenter and producer who is on the jury, said the talent on display was "born out of suffering". "Mosul is a wounded city. We sometimes hear bombing when people call in," he said. "We are often torn between the joy we get from this talent and the desire to cry."

'I want to be part of it'

One participant particularly moved the judges and audi-



Nour Al-Ta'i (center) walks with the help of her father at their home.

ence with her story and her reflections on Iraqi society. Nour Al-Ta'i, 15, began losing her sight in August 2015. By the time she told her parents, it was too late for doctors to determine the cause or save her from going blind. No longer able to devour books or watch television dramas, Nour discovered

the radio. "It takes me somewhere else. It's a world apart, it touches everyone. I want to be part of it," she told AFP.

Headphones over her ears, she "follows everything" on the radio, her mother said. "When IS was there and we weren't allowed to watch TV, she gave us the news," she said. Nour said that when she decided to take part in the competition, her family asked: "How do you want to become a journalist when we never hear your voice?" "I even asked myself: 'How can I do this?'" said Nour, who by her own admission is extremely shy. "But I had to do it, it was my dream."

"I try to look at a particular detail in society and examine it in depth, to make people question themselves," she said. On Saturday, she asked listeners to think about the word "freedom". "The country will be built by us, the young," she said. Moslawi said her previous broadcast on the subject of lying triggered a wave of messages.

"In 10 minutes she was second in the ranking, despite her young age," he said. "She knows how to reach people." Nour and MC Rico both won favor with the jury, but despite receiving thousands of votes each, they were beaten to the final by two singers and a reporter. But Al-Ghad is looking for presenters. Despite her young age and her disability, Nour may yet return to the airwaves. — AFP

Rebel parts of Syria revive beloved Arabian horse races

Perched on his chestnut steed Shams, teenager Munzer triumphantly held up his first place trophy at a rare horse race staged in an opposition-held area of Syria. Dozens of men and young children, their faces enveloped in red checkered keffiyehs, looked on as about 20 horses raced each other in the northern Syrian desert this month. The spectators broke out into a lively line-dance and shot celebratory gunfire into the air as each muscled creature blasted past the finish line, kicking up clouds of golden sand.



Munzir Jahjah carries a trophy as he celebrates his victory during a horse race for thoroughbred Arabian horses sponsored by Turkish NGO IHH in the southern Aleppo countryside. — AFP photos

Munzer Jahjah, only 14, was one of the youngest jockeys in the race outside the rebel-controlled village of Buwaider, in Aleppo province. "This is the first time I'm participating in a horse race, and I won first place!" said Munzer, affectionately patting Shams, whose name means "sun" in Arabic. His jet-black hair fell into his eyes, and instead of riding boots he wore a pair of sandals.

Forgoing the traditional saddle, Munzer had hung a colorful rug over the six-year-old mare—an Arabian purebred. Arabians are one of the oldest horse breeds in the world, known widely to be friendly, strong and excellent racers. The horses are thought to originate from the



Arabian Peninsula, but it was Bedouin tribes in the northern Syrian desert who became famous for maintaining their pure pedigree. In 2010, Syria had nearly 750 breeding Arabian horses, according to the World Arabian Horse Organization (WAHO), which aims to preserve Arabian purebreds around the globe.

'Rooted in Arab history'

But there have been no new WAHO reports on Syria's Arabian horses since 2011, when the country's devastating conflict broke out with widespread protests against President Bashar Al-Assad's rule. Since then, more than 320,000 people have been killed and half the country's population displaced. The war has also taken a toll on Syria's Arabian horses, many of which have been killed or wounded in fighting.

Proper veterinarian care and vaccines in particular are hard to come by, race organizer Mohammad Naanaa told AFP. Naanaa is the deputy chair of "Dawn for Arabian Horses," an opposition-run organization founded in 2016. "Equestrianism is rooted in our Arab history," Naanaa said. "Our goal is to preserve the pure breed of Arabian horses and try to provide them with health care and food," he told AFP.

To do so, they are registering any new Arabian horses born after Syria's conflict began. That registration process is a key part of preserving purebreds, said Yehya Al-Afandi, who heads Dawn for Arabian Horses. "Since the war broke

out, WAHO only registers horses in regime-controlled areas (where races are held on a regular basis). It doesn't interact with anyone in our (opposition) zones," Afandi said. As a result, no Arabian foals born in opposition-held territory after 2011 including Shams have been officially registered. "We are organizing ourselves, we're aiming to get these horses registered with WAHO," Afandi said.

'Forget the war'

Races like the one held outside Buwaider help draw attention to the horses' plight, Afandi added. In line with Islamic tradition and state laws across the region, betting is not allowed at the

horse races, which are split into two rounds: the first for purebreds, and the second for hybrids. The hybrid round was won by the stallion Buraaq—whose Arabic name translates to "shining"—and his grinning 34-year-old jockey Ramadan al-Issa. "This is the third time I win first place. I can't describe how happy I am," said Issa, who hails from neighboring Idlib province. Mustapha, 33, traveled from Idlib to cheer on Buraaq, his favorite horse. "Before the war, we would go to races each year. But now, they're about every two years," Issa told AFP. "You can feel people's joy all around you, and for a moment it makes you forget the atmosphere of war." — AFP





Afghan director Salim Shaheen during a photocall for French director Sonia Kronlund's documentary film 'Nothingwood', at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

'Afghan Spielberg' Shaheen goes down a storm at Cannes

In the hierarchy of world cinema, Hollywood is at the top. Then comes Bollywood and Nigeria's Nollywood. And then "way, way below comes us," says Salim Shaheen, a chubby Afghan actor who is his country's one-man film industry. "We are Nothingwood." Shaheen, who is 51 or 53 -- he is not quite sure himself -- is the stand-out revelation of this year's Cannes film festival. A gonzo director who has made 111 -- not always good -- films on a shoestring in a country where just watching one can get you killed, he and his endearingly eccentric band of actors are the stars of the festival's hit documentary.

"Nothingwood" is a hilarious, touching tribute to Shaheen, who The Hollywood Reporter reckons may be the most prolific filmmaker "in the entire world" and to his almost suicidal urge to perform. "I would die for cinema," Shaheen, who has been called the Afghan Steven Spielberg, told AFP. And he is not kidding. He survived a rocket attack on his studio in 1995 in which nine of his actors and crew died, and he and his recklessly brave companions regularly dodge minefields and the Taliban to make their action films and melodramas. "I am stronger than death," he said. "We Afghans don't worry about death. It will come, we just don't know when."

To say that Cannes has taken Shaheen and his merry men to their hearts is an understatement, with rave reviews and journalists queuing for hours to talk to him -- although this may have also something to do with Afghan time-keeping.

Cross between Seagal and Depardieu

A cross between Gerard Depardieu and Steven Seagal, "with his craft clearly inspired by the latter", Shaheen is reveling in the Cannes circus. "I cried tears of joy when I found out I was going to Cannes," he told AFP. "My dream is to come back and compete for the Palme d'Or with one of my own films. I'll have to make a good one. I have my camera with me here, but it has run out of batteries," he said. Shaheen said he was sure his new film will impress the Cannes jury. "I can't tell you exactly what it's about in case someone steals the idea. But it's a story that has never before been told on screen," he added.

By Hollywood standards, the quality of his films leaves a lot to be desired. Some are made in less than four days. But Shaheen, who cannot read or write, is adored in his homeland for his courage and humor, and the fact that the little guy always wins in the end. Even a few Taliban leaders -- who have outlawed music and movies -- are secret fans, while a masked fighter in the documentary admits many watch his films on their mobile phones. Shaheen acts, directs, produces and sings in his movies, with "live" music on set coming from his mobile phone. Nor has he much need for expensive make-up or special effects when you can kill a chicken and smear the cast with its blood.

Burqa agony uncle

"I have trained 95 percent of people who make film in Afghanistan," he boasted. Chain-smoking in her float pink veil, the documentary's French director Sonia Kronlund is a character herself in this breezy but deeply enlightening romp which sheds light on the warm and unexpectedly earthy humor of everyday Afghan life. Larger than life as Shaheen is, it's his leading lady -- who, this being Afghanistan, is a man -- who nearly steals the show. The witty and flamboyant Qurban Ali is a kind of agony aunt in an Afghan television show, where he appears in a burqa. — AFP

Film breaks silence on 'madness' of Sri Lanka civil war

Jude Ratnam is worried how his film might go down with his fellow Sri Lankan Tamils. And he has a point. "Demons in Paradise", which is premiering at the Cannes film festival, tells of the bloodbath that drove some Tamils to take up arms in the three decade-long insurgency that tore the island apart. But the documentary also shatters a taboo by insisting that some of most horrific violence the minority endured was at the hands of their supposed defenders, the Tamil Tigers. And the "hard truth" comes from the mouths of former Tamil fighters themselves.

"By making this film I know that I will have to face harsh, perhaps even hateful criticism from both communities," Ratnam said. "The Sinhalese will claim that I am betraying my country by stirring up the past that is best forgotten. The Tamils will insist that I betrayed our cause by revealing the atrocities committed by the Tamil Tigers." Ratnam was five when the anti-Tamil pogroms of "Black July" began in 1983, sending him and his family fleeing north from the massacres in the capital Colombo. Tamil grievances and suffering were real, the director insisted. The problem was "the Tamil liberation movement turned out to be complete madness" with many groups vying for control.

'Sun God' leader

As many as 20,000 civilians died as the Tigers -- led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, whose supporters venerated him as the "Sun God" -- imposed their will through a bloody reign of terror in the Tamil-dominated north. Ratnam believes another 10,000 disappeared after being tortured or taken to camps. "If you don't recognize that madness and just keep saying we were the victims, you are not facing the truth," he added. By 1986, less than three years into the civil war, "people were more afraid of the Tigers than the army," he told AFP. "People were terrified of them... they reigned supreme as the gods of revolutionary justice."

In the film, witnesses talk of the almost

daily public executions of "spies" and "traitors" in the Tigers' stronghold of Jaffna. Opponents were also "necklaced" with burning car tyres. In one electric scene Ratnam brings together rival former fighters to talk for the first time around a campfire about what they saw and did. If the film has a hero, it is his uncle, a former fighter who grew disillusioned with the struggle and risked his life to smuggle civilians out of Jaffna.

He returned from Canada with Ratnam

is innocent." Because of the Tigers' iron grip, "everybody got sucked into the ideology. The Tigers came to represent the Tamils, so if you are a Tamil you had to be a Tiger".

Ratnam took a decade to complete the film. Given the new Sri Lankan government's commitment to freedom of speech, he said he hoped "they will allow the film to be shown". "It is not going to be easy. Some of my close friends will be upset by it. It's a big taboo. I don't think I will be



(From left) Sri Lankan music composer Dharsan Rajkumar, French producer Julie Paratian, Sri Lankan director Jude Ratnam, French editor Jeanne Oberson and French director Isabelle Marina pose during a photocall for the film 'Demons in Paradise' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

to the family's ancestral village near Kandy for an emotional reunion with the Sinhalese neighbors who hid him during earlier anti-Tamil violence in 1977. "He's a great man," Ratnam said. "When I was 16 and I saw my people dying I wanted to fight. But he was the first to return and say, 'This wrong, it's messed up. What is going on is madness'."

'Silence is imposed'

Ratnam, the son of an Anglican priest, said facing up to the "hard truth of what happened is essential" if Tamils and the majority Sinhalese are to move on. "Seven years after the end of the war, the victors are celebrated, general amnesia is encouraged and silence is imposed," he added. "In a conflict that went on 30 years nobody

able to show my face in Tamil diaspora areas abroad (where support for the Tigers is still strong)... nor Tamil Nadu in India. "I am a Tamil, I don't deny my identity, but identity also gets us into some lunatic positions that deny the facts or inconvenient truths. 'Our people can't be wrong!' is the attitude."

Ratnam said he would be "much more comfortable back home" in Sri Lanka where people lived with the war to the bitter end in 2009. "Fear destroyed the lives of three generations" in Sri Lanka since British colonial rule, Ratnam said, when ethnic differences were used to "divide and rule". "My uncle had a gun. I have a camera... I want to avoid a fourth generation being trapped in the snare." — AFP

US heiress, actress Dina Merrill dead at 93

American heiress Dina Merrill, the Hollywood socialite who became a leading lady, has died aged 93. Merrill, raised in part on the Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida, now owned by President Donald Trump, died in New York on Monday after a battle with dementia, according to US media reports quoting family sources. Merrill appeared in more than 20 films and dozens of TV series after making her big screen debut in "Desk Set," a 1957 romantic comedy starring Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. Her co-stars during a career that lasted well into the 2000s included Robert Mitchum, Cary Grant, Tony Curtis and Elizabeth Taylor. Merrill's mother Marjorie Merriweather Post, an heiress to the Post cereal fortune, was estimated to be worth \$250 million when she died in 1973. The actress had two daughters and two sons, during marriages to wartime fighter pilot and Colgate heir Stanley Rumbough Jr and actor Cliff Robertson. In 1989 she married Ted Hartley, another former pilot, and the couple bought down-at-heel studio RKO Pictures, remaking the 1949 movie "Mighty Joe Young" in 1998. "I had the pleasure to work with the beautiful Dina Merrill in 'The Courtship of Eddie's Father'. — AFP



This file photo taken on April 5, 2004 shows actors Dina Merrill (left) and Charlize Theron talking at the after-party for RKO Pictures' 'Shade' in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



(From left) US actress Elle Fanning, US actress Kirsten Dunst, Irish actor Colin Farrell, Australian actress Nicole Kidman, US director Sofia Coppola, Australian actress Angourie Rice and US actress Addison Riecke pose as they arrive for the screening of the film 'The Beguiled' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Ukrainian director at Cannes condemns Moscow theatre raid

Ukrainian filmmaker Sergei Loznitsa yesterday condemned Russian raids on a top Moscow theatre and its outspoken director, as he unveiled his new feature at the Cannes film festival. "It really drives me mad," he told reporters after the premiere of his wrenching drama "A Gentle Creature" about a woman up against the cruelty and capriciousness of the Russian authorities. "I definitely hate arbitrariness and that is exactly what happened in Moscow at Kirill Serebrennikov's Gogol theatre."

Investigators searched the state-funded Gogol Centre theatre and Serebrennikov's flat in a show of force Tuesday, bringing rehearsals to a halt. Actors' phones were also confiscated as part of a fraud probe. Serebrennikov was taken in for questioning by investigators after the search of his flat which lasted several hours. He is a witness in the case of stolen money allocated by the government for the arts. The move drew strong criticism from prominent Russian arts figures including Bolshoi general director Vladimir Urin, who said he had written to President Vladimir Putin protesting over the handling of the investigation.

Serebrennikov is a theatre and film director who was appointed in 2012 to head an ailing and unpopular Soviet-era theatre, remaking it into a contemporary venue with his own radical stagings as well as hosting film and dance festivals. "A Gentle Creature", one of 19 films in competition for the Palme d'Or top prize at Cannes on Sunday, tells the story of a woman who goes on an nightmarish odyssey trying to learn the fate of her jailed spouse.

Inspired by a Dostoyevsky short story, she travels to a Siberian prison town to find her husband and hit a wall of indifference and sadism. Underworld types try to exploit her desperation, and an exhausted human rights activist warns her not to pursue her search too publicly. Loznitsa said that while the film offered an unflinching portrayal of Russian society, its themes were more universal. "You shouldn't limit this story to a specific country," he said. "It's the machine of the state I'm targeting. In most countries, there is a state and then the state machine." — AFP



(From left) Danish producer Marianne Slot, Russian director Sergei Loznitsa, actress Vasilina Makovtseva, Moldovan actor Valeriu Andriuta and French producer Carine Leblanc pose as they arrive on May 25, 2017 for the screening of the film 'Krotkaya' (A Gentle Creature) at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

'Twilight' star Robert Pattinson revamps career at Cannes

"Twilight" star Robert Pattinson earned the best reviews of his career at Cannes yesterday playing a New York bank robber and revealed he had to outsmart the paparazzi in order to play the part. Pattinson, 31, shed his heartthrob looks for the role in "Good Time" by American brothers Josh and Benny Safdie, sporting a shaggy bleach-blond mane and a torso full of tattoos to portray a man on the run. As one of the world's most sought-after celebrities, Pattinson told reporters the hardest part of shooting the film was dodging the photographers who routinely hound him.

"I always wanted to look like I've been street cast," he said about creating his look for the movie, whose cast has many amateur actors including a former convict. "Because we were shooting guerrilla-style, I was so nervous about people finding out about the shoot and paparazzi being there." He said a makeup artist helped render him anonymous. "You've got these pockmarks on the skin and no one recognized" him, he said.

"We shot the movie on the streets of New York, and no one (even) took a cell-phone picture." Pattinson said he had long wanted to work with the Safdie brothers, who made a splash in 2009 with their debut film "Daddy Longlegs". "I've never experienced such a level of intensity on set, they don't only thrive on chaos, they create it," Pattinson said.

Revving at a red light

"Good Time" wowed Cannes critics, who compared it to classic 1970s New York City movies by the likes of Martin Scorsese and Sidney Lumet, and the 2011 Ryan Gosling hit "Drive". They said Pattinson's part was a game changer. The Hollywood Reporter described the movie as a "riveting race-against-time thriller with a pounding heart" and said Pattinson had delivered "a performance of can't-look-away intensity without an ounce of movie-star vanity". Variety called it "a career-peak performance" while the Daily Telegraph's Tim Robey tweeted that Pattinson was "absolutely terrific" in the



British actor Robert Pattinson poses during a photocall for the film 'Good Time'.

movie and could "easily win Best Actor here".

Hollywood comedian Adam Sandler also used Cannes' red carpet for a career relaunch this year, attracting glowing reviews for his soulful, restrained turn in Noah Baumbach's family drama "The Meyerowitz Stories". Benny Safdie, who also plays the role of the mentally disabled brother of Pattinson's character who accompanies him on an ill-fated heist, said Pattinson had thrown himself into the role. "He went full on... everything we did he was game for," he said. "He has huge passion and drive. He went five extra miles." Pattinson said he had tapped into his manic side for the part. "No one really sees that," he said. "That's a private thing. I'm someone who just stops at a red light and I'm just revving." "Good Time" is among 19 contenders for the Palme d'Or top prize, to be awarded Sunday. — AFP



(From left) US director Josh Safdie, British actor Robert Pattinson and US director Benny Safdie, US actor Buddy Duress, US actress Taliah Webster, US screenwriter Ronnie Bronstein, US producer Oscar Boyson and US actor Aebastian Bear pose yesterday during a press conference for the film 'Good Time' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

COOKING ON DEADLINE :

Light green crunchy salad

By Katie Workman

There's always a green salad with dinner in our house, usually the crunchier the better. If I told you how many hearts of romaine we go through in a week, you'd be unsettled. This salad, originally published in "Dinner Solved!", is so heartbreakingly pretty that I always want people to come over just to admire it. And it's not just easy on the eyes. It's clean and vibrant and refreshing, and we can plow through the hugest bowl in a matter of minutes.

It came about because a few years back, I was writing an article about surprising salad add-ins, and I decided to list shredded or slivered raw kohlrabi as one of the possibilities. Then I said to myself, "You are so full of it; you've never done that in your whole life." So I bought myself a kohlrabi and sliced it up, and really fell head over heels. It kind of reminded me of a daikon radish, crisp with just a hint of spiciness.

Peel the kohlrabi thoroughly with a sharp knife - the skin is too thick for a vegetable peeler to have much effect. A handful of pea shoots on top of the salad adds a fresh sweet-pea-ness that's lovely, but don't skip the salad if pea shoots aren't available.

LIGHT GREEN CRUNCHY SALAD

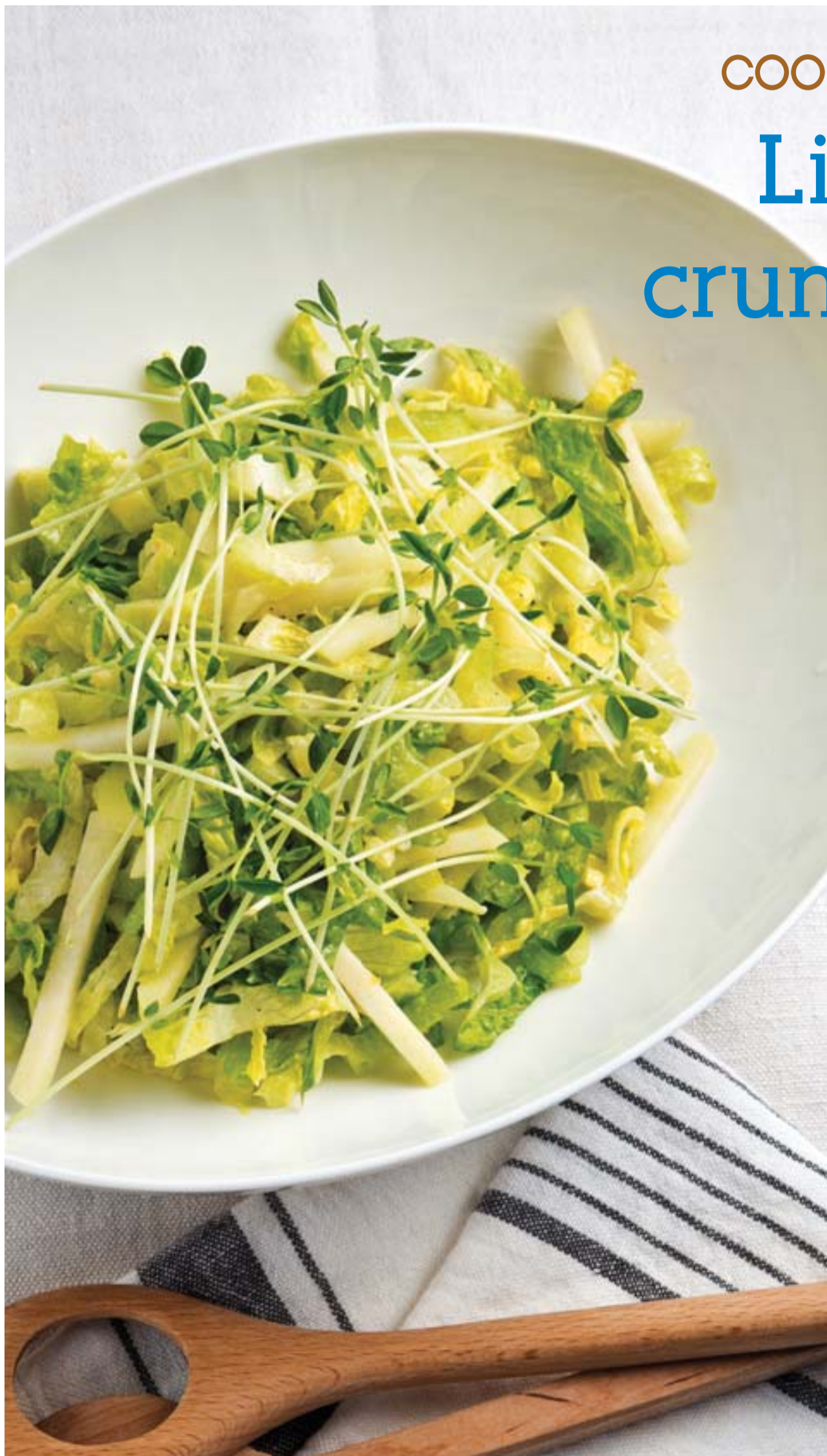
Ingredients

Serves 6 as a side dish
Start to finish: 15 minutes
1 small kohlrabi, trimmed and peeled (optional)
10 ribs celery
3 hearts romaine lettuce
3 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 cup pea shoots (optional)

Preparation

If using the kohlrabi, cut it into manageable chunks and then cut those chunks into thick planks, about 1/4-inch thick. Then sliver up those planks into 1/4-inch-thick matchsticks (known as a julienne cut). Don't worry if the slivers aren't neat and tidy. Slice the celery crosswise very thinly, and then do the same with the hearts of romaine so that you have thin ribbons of lettuce. Place it all in a serving bowl, along with the kohlrabi. Whisk together the rice vinegar, olive oil, mustard, and salt and pepper in a small bowl (or shake it in a small container with a lid). Toss the vegetables with the dressing and serve, topped with the pea shoots, if desired. — AP

Nutrition information per serving: 95 calories; 64 calories from fat; 7 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 301 mg sodium; 7 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 3g sugar; 1 g protein.



Salmon on the grill gets tasty with miso and lime juice

By Melissa D'Arabian

Salmon season has arrived, and the markets are brimming with gorgeous wild varieties like King Salmon and Coho, which are perfect for grilling, poaching or even simply cooking in a lightly-oiled pan. With summer here, fire up the barbecue and master the grilled salmon - it's an incredibly versatile blank canvas that you can use in everything from light salads to heady curries to spicy tacos. And grilling salmon is quite easy, as long as you follow the rule to pull it off the grill just a minute before you think it's actually done.

Coat salmon fillets with a little oil, salt and pepper, and cook until the salmon is almost opaque; "cook until flaky" is bad advice

that will leave your salmon overcooked and strong-flavored. One of our summertime favorites is Easy Summer Miso Salmon, which pairs miso with refreshing lime juice to create something between a creamy sauce and a citrus vinaigrette.

Miso, or fermented soy bean paste, adds a ton of savory flavor ("umami") and depth, while the lime juice keeps the recipe bright and summery. There's garlic and ginger for flavor, but the shallot keeps the flavor more Californian than Asian, although you could certainly add soy sauce, Mirin (Japanese wine) and chopped cilantro if you wanted to. Serve with brown rice, grilled veggies or a bunch of vegetable "noodles" for a filling and healthy summer supper.

Miso paste comes in various colors, with white and yellow

being the mildest varieties, and perhaps the most widely available ones at the local supermarket. Keep a container of miso in the fridge (it lasts for months), and you can try adding a spoonful to soups, stews, dressings and dips, or even just stir it into a cup of boiling water and add a splash of soy sauce and rice vinegar for a warming quick broth. Miso is low in calories, and offers a little protein and a smattering of minerals, including sodium, so you won't likely need additional salt when using miso paste. Try this week's recipe and add two new tools to your repertoire: grilled salmon and miso.



EASY SUMMER MISO SALMON

Ingredients

Servings: 6

Start to finish: 20 minutes

Salmon:

1 1/2 pounds wild Alaskan salmon fillet, such as King or Coho

1 teaspoon neutral oil, like olive or grapeseed

1/4 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon pepper

Sauce:

1 tablespoon olive oil

2 shallots, minced

2 cloves garlic, chopped

1 teaspoon fresh minced ginger

3 tablespoons white miso paste

1 teaspoon raw honey

1/4 cup lime juice (or lemon juice)

3-4 tablespoons water

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Preparation

Heat the grill to medium and lightly oil the grates. Rub the salmon all over with the olive oil, and sprinkle with the salt and pepper. Cook the salmon flesh side down first, (skin side up), until almost cooked through, about 7-10 minutes total, flipping halfway through. (Internal temperature will be about 140 F, and it will rise to 145 F as it rests.)

Meanwhile, make the sauce (or can be made in advance): heat the olive oil over medium heat in a small saute pan and cook the shallots until tender, about three minutes. (Sprinkle with a little

splash of water if needed to keep shallots from browning.) Add the ginger and garlic and cook another minute. Add the miso paste and mix with a wooden spoon for another minute or two, or until very fragrant and the miso paste begins to deepen a little in color. Remove from heat, cool a minute, and then place in the blender with the honey, lime juice, water, mustard and black pepper and blend until smooth. Add extra water if needed. Spoon the miso sauce onto the hot salmon and serve with brown rice or veggies.

Chef's Note: The sauce can be made into a salad dressing by thinning with more water and lime juice. - AP

By Aakash Bakaya

In 1979 director Ridley Scott took a long un-wanted, constantly altered screenplay and gave the world 'Alien'. It birthed a new-age of sci-fi classics and forever changed our perceptions of the great wide beyond of space. 7 years later, a young James Cameron would spear-head his sequel 'Aliens' and create another sci-fi masterpiece for the ages.

The mythology, the settings and the awe-inspiring terror and design of the classic Xenomorph will go down in cinema history forever. Sadly though, the magic and passion that brought those two films to life have been brought down time and time again by fanatical studio heads, tightly-pressured filmmakers and over ambitious writers who have left this beloved franchise deteriorating in a pool of mediocrity. 'Alien: Covenant' initially looks down and frowns at this pool. Initially showing signs of what made its historical predecessors great but as it progresses, it resigns itself to its faith and jumps right in with the others, wallowing and splashing with the rest of its deformed step-brothers.

That initial promise showcased in the first 30 minutes of 'Covenant' is all the more disappointing because of how the film ends up. Muddled, scatter-shot and frustratingly predictable - the second and third act of this decent sci-fi flick sinks the franchise once again right when you think it's at least attempting to hit the highs of the first two.



Movie review

ALIEN COVENANT

Dreaming in space, screaming in space

After a brief prologue with David, the android from 'Prometheus', we are taken aboard a colonization ship aptly named Covenant. Bound for a remote habitable planet and harbouring over 2000 embryos on board, it runs into a bit of space turbulence that wakes up the hibernating crew but kills the ship's captain. Shaken and confused with what happens next, they receive a distress signal from a near-by planet which looks even better than the one they were destined towards. The newly-appointed captain brashly decides to head there instead to assess if the situation is truly too good to be true. This is an Alien film so it turns out to be exactly that.

The tension and set-up here is impeccable. It does away with the rambling, laborious set-ups of 'Aliens 3' and 'Prometheus' and gives us a relatable crew that looks capable, professional and most importantly fit for the job they were hired to do. The decision to alter course is understandable because of the recent trauma and the risks are weighed heavily. When the ship's AI reveals where transmission is coming from (LV-223, the birth planet of the Xenomorphs) and the iconic 'Alien' soundtrack starts playing in the background - I legitimately got goose bumps. I was pumped up and eagerly awaiting the carnage to come. But as things start falling apart for our crew, the film follows suit.

I wrestled with the idea of adding spoilers here and ultimately decided I would. For those who wish to go into the movie fresh, I would suggest you skip the next few paragraphs.

Retcons and picnics

So the crew lands and finds the derelict alien spacecraft from 'Prometheus' but along the way, two crew members get infected with an air-borne virus containing DNA remnants of a Xenomorph. In classic Alien fashion, creatures burst out of their bodies and goes on a miniature killing spree that slaughters only the unnamed members of our crew. From the get-go, long-time fans will be peeved at how fast and loose the filmmakers are treating the mythos (air-borne viruses now gestate into full-blown creatures within an hour?) and casual movie-goers will be either confused or sick with the extreme bursts of violence.

Bodies get quite literally ripped apart and if you're someone who isn't use to such visuals I would suggest you stay away. I'm far from a squeamish viewer but I can safely say that

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it goes over the top and attempts to distract the audience with gore rather than engross them with a suspenseful plot. The characters as well begin acting in ludicrous fashion. They step outside without even a helmet, stick their exposed faces at unknown organisms and simply treating the expedition like their on a picnic. Whatever tension that was set up is immediately lost as the plot starts relying on the crew making the most asinine of decisions one after the other.

The story then shifts into tying up the loose ends of 'Prometheus' by re-introducing us to David, the sole survivor from the previous movie. Like 'Aliens 3', this franchise can't seem to keep its interesting characters around and cheaply disposes of Dr Elizabeth Shaw with a ham-fisted 'she died in between movies' excuse. David for that matter, is given a much more pivotal role and Michael Fassbender hits both David and Walter his identical android from the Covenant squarely out of the park. It's a riveting performance and even though I disliked how integral he becomes to the entire foundation of the Alien universe, I can't deny that Fassbender created a great character in the process. Some intriguing backstory is revealed here but is a hit-and-a-miss both logically and in the overall plot structure. The new Neomorph also shows up but its screen time is short-lived. It's a strange but bland

creature and shares the Xenomorphs subpar CGI. They honestly looked better in 1986.

The third and last act of the film is so trivial and unnecessary I'm struggling to see why I should even bother even acknowledging it here. It shoe-horns both an anti-climactic threat and a super obvious 'twist' ending which should have been completely reworked or just left on the cutting room floor.

So where does this leave 'Alien: Covenant' both on its own and in terms for the rest of the franchise? Ultimately, it's a needless sequel to a lacklustre movie that had every right being better than it turned out to be. 'Covenant' is a more gripping, all-together better film than 'Prometheus', one that fans and non-fans will enjoy to varying degrees. Questions and theories still remain lingering and in some cases are left more convoluted than they were before. But there are those that enjoy that side of the Alien franchise so I can't blame Ridley Scott for sticking to those guns. As a massive, long-time fan of the original and sequel, I left with a bitter-sweet taste in my mouth. The franchise remains swimming in a pool of mediocrity but maybe after all this time - a dim hope might have been reborn.



Friday Times

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2017

Travel



Xi'an: an exciting mix of
hip and heritage



Splendid Xi'an

Old and new in

China's
ancient Tang capital



Cycling the city's intact wall is a great way to see Xi'an

It was once called the 'city of enduring peace' (Chang'an) and served as the capital of China during the empire's cultural golden age, the Tang dynasty (618-907). A perennial stop for history-loving travelers, Xi'an is home to the country's longest intact city wall and it is a place steeped in Silk Road narrative. As synonymous with China's astonishing history as the Great Wall, the silently mesmerizing spectacle of the Army of Terracotta Warriors remains Xi'an's draw card experience. And in 2017, the site celebrates 30 years since its inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list. With new high-speed rail and flight connections, a visa-free transit scheme and combo of old world Chinese heritage and up-and-coming hotspots, this year is shaping up to be a better time than ever to discover Xi'an's marvels.

Warriors of clay

No matter how often you see them in photographs, nothing quite primes you for your first encounter with the silent ranks of the Army of Terracotta Warriors, stumbled upon accidentally by farmers digging a well in 1974. You can explore China from pillar to post, but rarely come face to face with heritage of similar awe-inspiring antiquity, particularly in such original, undisturbed form. Don't overlook the Qin Shi Huang Emperor Tomb Artefact Exhibition Hall, which contains a pair of astonishing early bronze chariots and a terracotta officer in a glass cabinet. An expanding array of restaurants as you exit the site for the return trip to Xi'an can sort out lunch and the cafe in the theatre building serves good coffee.

Heritage, not height

Modern architecture is often at the fore in today's China, but it's refreshing to visit an ancient city still in touch with its past. Xi'an isn't an observation-deck city like Hong Kong or Shanghai, so you won't find yourself staggering through a dizzying forest of skyscrapers. Relatively low-lying, Xi'an has preserved much of its heritage and historical integrity, particularly its ancient architecture. Combined with an easy-going tempo and laid-back northern Chinese disposition, Xi'an conveys a sense of what China's older quarters were once like.

Wheeling the city walls

Xi'an remains the only major city in China where you can bicycle atop the original city walls, a highly satisfying and unique way of gazing into the old city from the Ming dynasty ramparts. In summer, aim for late afternoon, when the sun is dipping over town and the heat is off the boil (it's also a better time for photography). You can, of course, also tackle the bastion on foot (give yourself

around four hours at a leisurely pace) - a terrific way to shed calories and sightsee at the same time.

Snacking the backstreets

Like everywhere across China, Xi'an's restaurant scene continues to evolve, but the

home-grown flavors unique to Xi'an are the perennial draw. The Muslim Quarter is permeated with the seasoned aromas of street food that hang over the town, generating an almost insatiable hunger. Follow your nostrils for the city's best eats and you'll soon be steeped in the aromas of the city's signature

dish - paomo (a lamb or beef broth poured over bread that you break into small crumbs in a bowl). This moreish dish can be sampled at Ma Hong Xiaochao Paomoguan, while the Muslim Family Restaurant at the heart of the this district is a great place to sample a whole array of local specialties.



The Army of Terracotta Warriors celebrates 30 years since its Unesco inscription in 2017

Evening falls on the Bell Tower and distant Drum Tower



Spiritual city

Xi'an is home to China's notable collection of Tang dynasty pagodas: the Big Goose Pagoda and the Little Goose Pagoda, which differ from later (and more common) Chinese pagodas in their great age and squarish, brickwork lines. For a view

of all the vibrant color of Tibetan Buddhism, pay a visit to Guangren Temple in the northwest corner of the city, within the town walls - this is Shaanxi province's sole Tibetan Buddhist temple. Visit off-season and find in Xi'an's splendid Chinese-style Great Mosque a haven of tranquility.

New discoveries

Like many of China's big cities, Xi'an is undergoing the beginnings of a renaissance, with cafes, hotels and trendy establishments starting to crop up. The city is home to some of the best hostels in China, which push the boat out in service, whether you're staying in a double room or a dorm. Hantang House is an excellent choice, with motivated staff and all manner of activities for international visitors to join in, as well as a great bar, Jamaica Blue, which is one of several venues championing Xi'an's burgeoning live music scene.

Also a sign of the times, in 2014 Xi'an got its first craft brewery. Xi'an Brewery (xianbrewery.com) is the brainchild of an American expat

who wanted to bring US-style beer to the city. Their core suite of beers (ranging from a German-style kolsch to a milk stout) can be sampled at the Near Wall Bar (40 West Section of Shuncheng South Rd), a converted brick space just inside the city's old wall.

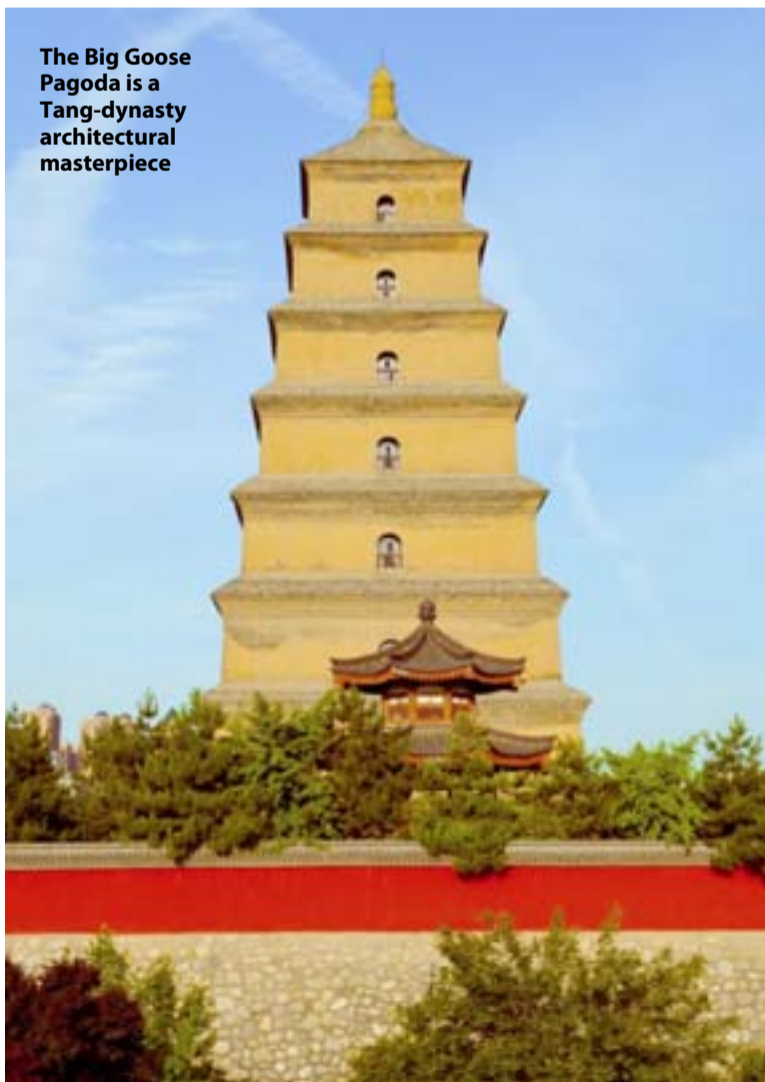
On the up: connected and visa-free

Xi'an has benefited from a batch of new flight connections, including the first direct flight from London on Tianjin Airlines. The city is well served by high-speed trains that whisk you to town in a jiffy. Bullet trains now connect Xi'an with many places further afield in China, including Beijing in a little over five hours, while the tail end of 2017 will

see the launch of a HSR connection to Chengdu, making journeys south to Sichuan quick and effortless, and chopping travel time from 13 hours to around three.

Xi'an's metro continues to simplify getting around: line 3 opened at the end of 2016 (and giving Big Goose Pagoda its own station) and line 4 is due to be up and running by 2018. Plans are also in place for a line that will reach all the way to the Terracotta Warrior Army. The 72-hour visa-free scheme means you can plan a stopover in Xi'an en route to somewhere else and spend three days exploring town. Travelers need proof of a flight onward from China to a third destination in order to slot Xi'an into a travel itinerary to avail of the scheme. — (www.lonelyplanet.com)

The Big Goose Pagoda is a Tang-dynasty architectural masterpiece



Foodie delights on the backstreets of Xi'an's Muslim Quarter



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Work, achievement and ambition mean a lot to you. This is a perfect time to be assertive and to move forward in your career decisions. You have a lot of enthusiasm to gain those wonderful successful results. It should be easy to channel your energy. You will find the path is open and clear. This is a time when you can expect some sort of extra support from those around you. You may feel that you are in harmony with others and that you will have the help you need to complete some project or to understand some difficulty. You may find yourself being put to good use by your friends this afternoon and it could be that circumstances force you to reorganize some of your own plans. A little romance this evening is the perfect ending to a very busy day.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Although routine matters at work go well, this may not be the best time for career or vocational decisions that would cause a big change in your life. You may be moved to appreciate and discover the beauty in your life. At the same time, merchandise and good buys may be very inviting. You could have trouble holding onto money at this time because of your need to purchase special items. This could include a bad investment, unpaid debts, a loan or giving to too many charities. You are wise to be cautious when giving and to discriminate between those who truly need help financially and those engaged in rip-offs. This is, however, a great time for a social get-together with friends or family near or in your own home.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This morning may be a bit slow but your work will gather steam as the day moves along. If you are into detective work there may be too many different versions of a particular development for you to respond quickly. This may be in any type of decision-making scenario: health, direction, identification, clear viewing, etc. You may decide it would be best to declare that further research is needed. You still have a very busy day ahead of you. In order to see any progress, it would be good to keep notes for review and write reports at a later time. It is important that you have enough information to support your ideas or someone else's claims. This afternoon you will find plenty of opportunities to relax and laugh and be with friends.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You like a conventional career. The well-trodden path is where one can find you. You may go out of your way to conform and avoid the new, novel and unconventional with great vigor. Although you may fight for your place in line, your attitude is positive and upbeat. Your money and career take precedence. You can take orders, be a good teammate and work with others, but you are basically an independent worker. Your hard work is paying off as your name and reputation is being exchanged by those in position to make a positive difference for you. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive. A friend or relative may come to visit this evening. Absorb yourself into new subjects.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You love to communicate and will pursue a variety of conversations today. The mental world appeals to you and you are very discriminating, but appreciative, when it comes to concepts, ideas and thoughts, etc. You value good research and real inquiry. In-depth discussions and probing conversations find you at your mental best. Your analytical abilities are strong and people come to you for a final word, so to speak. It would not be too surprising for you to have positive results from your input in the workplace. You have favorable energies that will bring pleasant surprises. You can do more than you give yourself credit for and you may find your limitations narrowing-mentally and physically. Your family is supportive of your activities.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Things are happening in your career that will become quite positive . . . A path will open up and present some good opportunities for you. This may mean a total change or a simple raise. It is where you look and what you want that matters at this time and it would be advisable to give your future goals a lot of thought; these goals are yours for the taking. You are able to use good sense and make all the right moves to secure your future. This is a time to get ahead. Your home environment, friends and surroundings become simplified and will receive encouragement. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized at this period in your life. You are appreciated for your hard work-at work and at home.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You could spend a great deal of time helping others this Thursday. While it is good to help others, if you let this get out of hand you could feel used-having little time left for your own progress. You will be in a position to communicate to your co-workers and people apart from work today. You will prosper by pursuing your ideals and most deep-seated dreams of how life could be. Don't be afraid to project yourself and make your dreams real. Ideas of group participation could further your career. You excel at professions that allow you to be in contact with many different people and to travel to new and exciting locations. Your sensitivity may be increased, making you vulnerable to delusions. The romantic dreamer is in full blossom.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Avoid the tendency to be fooled by others as you may sometimes find yourself ignoring what is underneath a conversation. Use your intuition today-it may lead to new insights. This may not be the best time to make important decisions that affect your living situation or life circumstances. Others may challenge your authority or the direction you are taking. Just watch and learn for now. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive. There is an instinctive urge to get serious about taking care of you-at many levels. You want to feel good about yourself-diet, exercise and work somehow mean more. Deep within you is everything that is perfect, ready to radiate into the world. It is your decision about the path.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Correct choices and what seems to be the best path for you may be at odds with your sense of values. You may not appreciate the easy way or a clear-cut option-you may choose instead a more difficult path. Your thirst for experience and growth always keeps you on the move. These could be the areas in which you struggle now. You adjust and change your ideals often and struggle not to become carried away with each new vision. The world of your imagination is the perfect place for a major focus of change. A book could be in the forecast. You will have support from those around you whatever you choose for this day. Tonight is the perfect time for a leisurely meal with your loved one. Perhaps a card game or word game would be fun.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You set the example for others in a time when some co-workers might become bored. You are at your best today and can assuage any futile activity. Events seem to line up in your favor to help push you over the top to new heights. Be aware that supervisors usually know most everything that happens under their care. A promotion or recognition for past accomplishments could be near. You have a new project soon that not only needs your inspiration but your special approach. Projects at work and at home will come into fruition soon. At home, you may find yourself just as tired as if this had been an extremely busy day at work. Exercise is your best option to a transition from work to home-bicycling, bowling or running is a good choice.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You will find yourself ready and interested in the work today. Professional decisions are straightforward and easy to make. You make your way through ideas, concepts and your ability to communicate and express them to others. Friends, group projects and community concerns could play a key role that could change your career direction. Goodwill and humanitarian efforts can change your work and life path. This is a time of good fortune when things open up in a very natural way. Situations are almost magical-it is easy to see which path to take. Taking chances can bring big rewards. This afternoon you relax with friends or loved ones. You are unusually affectionate this evening and will likely have the affections reciprocated.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Work moves along in a smooth manner this Friday and you have a talent for finding and working through problems. You may feel more at ease this month and find it easy to balance finances, emotions and responsibilities. There are fewer demands just now so you may have to watch out for the tendency to be a bit lazy. Be aware that you can use your free time to your benefit. Wiggle your toes in a pond or creek. Learn a new skill or hobby-catch up on being organized. You are a good cook and may enjoy growing your own herbs this summer. The healing properties in just the good smells from the herbs and the cooking will give you many days of enjoyment this summer. Working with nature will give you a unique satisfaction as well.

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 Salvage Hunters
02:50 Todd Sampson's Body Hack
03:40 Misfit Garage
04:30 Garage Gold
05:00 How Do They Do It?
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Abandoned Engineering
06:50 You Have Been Warned
07:40 Gold Divers
08:30 What On Earth?
09:20 Rebel Gold
10:10 Todd Sampson's Body Hack
11:00 Killing The Colorado
12:40 Heavy Rescue
13:30 Fast N' Loud
14:20 Diesel Brothers
15:10 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
16:00 Yukon Men
16:50 Yukon Men
17:40 Yukon Men
18:30 Yukon Men
19:20 Yukon Men
21:00 Fast N' Loud
21:50 Diesel Brothers
22:40 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
23:30 Killing The Colorado

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

14:55 The Zhuzhus
15:45 Elena Of Avalor
16:10 Liv And Maddie
16:35 Princess Diaries
18:35 Welcome To The Ronks
18:50 Best Friends Whenever
19:15 Star Darlings
19:20 Liv And Maddie
19:45 Hank Zipzer
20:10 Jessie
20:35 Cracked
20:40 Disney The Lodge
21:05 Bizaardvark
21:30 That's So Raven
21:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts
22:00 Shake It Up
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



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

05:45 Loopdidoo
06:00 Zou
06:15 Calimero
06:30 Loopdidoo
06:45 Henry Hugglemonster
07:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
07:25 Sofia The First
07:50 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:15 PJ Masks
08:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:05 Goldie & Bear
09:35 The Lion Guard
10:05 Sofia The First
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:05 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
11:35 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
12:05 Gummi Bears
12:35 Miles From Tomorrow
13:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
14:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
15:00 Sofia The First
15:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
15:55 Sofia The First
16:20 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
16:50 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
17:15 Sofia The First
17:40 Doc McStuffins
18:05 PJ Masks
18:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
19:05 The Lion Guard
19:35 The Lion Guard
20:05 Goldie & Bear
20:35 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
21:00 Gummi Bears
21:25 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
21:50 Minnie's Bow-Toons
22:00 Doc McStuffins
22:30 Doc McStuffins



06:00 Gravity Falls
06:25 Disney11
06:50 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
07:15 Milo Murphy's Law
07:25 Danger Mouse
07:40 Supa Strikas
08:05 Two More Eggs
08:10 K.C. Undercover
08:35 Counterfeit Cat
09:00 Lab Rats
09:25 Lab Rats
09:50 Future-Worm!
10:20 Pair Of Kings
10:45 Pair Of Kings
11:10 Danger Mouse
11:35 Supa Strikas
12:00 Supa Strikas
12:30 Gravity Falls
12:55 Anndroids
13:20 The Suite Life On Deck
13:45 The Suite Life On Deck
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 The Suite Life On Deck
14:40 The Suite Life On Deck
15:05 Bedtime Stories
16:40 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:50 Disney11
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Milo Murphy's Law
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Gravity Falls
18:35 Mighty Med
19:00 Atomic Puppet
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Mech-X4
20:45 Disney11
21:10 Walk The Prank
21:35 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am
KSA

15:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
16:00 Paul O'Grady's Animal Orphans
16:55 Surprise Surprise
17:50 Coach Trip
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
21:00 Paul O'Grady's Animal Orphans



00:15 Access 360 World Heritage
01:10 Poh & Co.
01:40 Croatia's Finest
02:05 What's For Sale?
03:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
03:55 Street Food Around The World
04:25 Tom's Istanbul Delight
04:50 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
05:45 Poh & Co.
06:15 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
07:10 Croatia's Finest
07:35 What's For Sale?
08:30 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
09:25 Street Food Around The World
09:55 Tom's Istanbul Delight
10:20 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
11:15 Poh & Co.
11:45 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
12:40 Croatia's Finest
13:05 What's For Sale?
14:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
14:55 Chocolate Covered
15:25 Tom's Istanbul Delight
15:50 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
16:45 Poh & Co.
17:15 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
18:10 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
19:05 Chocolate Covered
19:30 Tom's Istanbul Delight
20:00 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
21:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
22:00 Poh & Co.
22:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita



00:00 The First 48
01:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
02:00 Homicide Hunter
03:00 Cold Case Files
04:00 The First 48
05:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
06:00 My Crazy Ex
07:00 My Crazy Ex
08:00 Evil Up Close
09:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
10:00 Homicide Hunter
11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:00 My Crazy Ex
14:00 Evil Up Close
15:00 Homicide Hunter
16:00 Crime Stories
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 Evil Up Close
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Killer Kids
23:00 Deadly Wives



00:30 Invent It Rich
01:20 Secret Space Escapes
02:10 How The Universe Works
03:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
03:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Storm Chasers
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 K9 Cops
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Invent It Rich
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 K9 Cops
12:00 Ultimate Survival
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Storm Chasers
14:30 Kenny The Shark
14:55 Awesome Adventures
15:20 K9 Cops
16:10 Invent It Rich
17:00 Now That's Funny
17:50 Don't Blink
18:15 Don't Blink
18:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Now That's Funny
22:00 Don't Blink
22:25 Don't Blink
22:50 Kids Do The Craziest Things
23:15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
23:40 Ultimate Survival



GHOSTBUSTERS II

GHOSTBUSTERS II ON OSN MOVIES HD



00:05 Second Wives Club
00:55 Second Wives Club
01:50 E! News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story
03:20 Celebrity Style Story
03:50 WAGs
04:40 WAGs
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 E! News
06:55 E! News
07:10 E! News
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 E! News
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News
15:15 Fashion Police
16:10 Botched
17:05 Second Wives Club
18:00 Second Wives Club
19:00 E! News
20:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
23:00 E! News
23:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



00:10 Cash Trapped
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Who's Doing The Dishes?
03:25 Britain's Spending Secrets
04:20 5 Star Family Reunion
05:15 Coach Trip
05:45 Coach Trip
06:10 Cash Trapped
07:05 Who's Doing The Dishes?
08:00 Britain's Spending Secrets
09:00 5 Star Family Reunion
10:00 Coach Trip
10:30 Coach Trip
10:55 Cash Trapped
11:50 Who's Doing The Dishes?
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Cash Trapped



00:20 Asia's Deadliest Snakes
01:10 A Wild Dog's Tale
02:00 Planet Carnivore: Perfect Killers
02:50 Animals Gone Wild Compilations
03:45 Animal Fight Club
04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
05:35 Planet Carnivore: Perfect Killers
06:30 Animals Gone Wild Compilations
07:25 Animal Fight Club
08:20 Ultimate Animal Countdown
09:15 Python Hunters
10:10 Grit: Honey Badger Tough
11:05 Return Of The Spider Monkeys
12:00 Shark Men
12:55 Big Cat Games
13:50 Wild Indochina
14:45 World's Creepiest Killers
15:40 My Life Is A Zoo
16:35 Python Hunters
17:30 Europe's Last Wilderness
18:25 Gorilla Murders
19:20 World's Creepiest Killers
20:10 My Life Is A Zoo
21:00 Python Hunters
21:50 Europe's Last Wilderness
22:40 Gorilla Murders
23:30 Shark Men



00:10 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
01:00 Inside
02:00 Locked Up Abroad
03:00 Genius
04:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
05:00 Yukon Gold
06:00 Helicopter Wars
07:00 Scam City
08:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
09:00 Yukon Gold
10:00 Locked Up Abroad
11:00 Uncensored With Michael Ware

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2017

- 12:00 Route Awakening
- 12:30 Route Awakening
- 13:00 Helicopter Wars
- 14:00 Danger Decoded
- 14:30 Danger Decoded
- 15:00 Scam City
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 Border Wars
- 18:00 Underworld, Inc.
- 19:00 Scam City
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 Border Wars
- 21:40 Underworld, Inc.
- 22:30 Scam City
- 23:20 Helicopter Wars



- 00:00 Olive The Ostrich
- 00:05 Max & Ruby
- 00:28 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:38 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:48 The Day Henry Met
- 00:53 The Day Henry Met
- 00:59 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:21 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:43 Zack & Quack
- 02:05 Team Umizoomi
- 02:27 Olive The Ostrich
- 02:32 Olive The Ostrich
- 02:37 Paw Patrol
- 02:59 Little Charmers
- 03:11 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 03:23 Dora The Explorer
- 03:45 Max & Ruby
- 04:08 Bubble Guppies
- 04:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 04:54 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 05:17 Zack & Quack
- 05:27 The Day Henry Met
- 05:32 The Day Henry Met
- 05:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 06:00 Rusty Rivets
- 06:13 Paw Patrol
- 06:37 Dora The Explorer
- 07:00 Zack & Quack
- 07:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 07:45 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 08:07 Paw Patrol
- 08:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 08:54 Dora The Explorer
- 09:16 The Day Henry Met
- 09:21 Paw Patrol
- 09:44 Rusty Rivets
- 09:57 Bubble Guppies
- 10:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 10:42 Zack & Quack
- 10:54 Team Umizoomi
- 11:17 Shimmer And Shine
- 11:39 Louie
- 11:46 Louie
- 11:52 Olive The Ostrich
- 11:57 Olive The Ostrich
- 12:02 Max & Ruby
- 12:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:46 The Day Henry Met
- 12:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:42 Zack & Quack
- 14:03 Team Umizoomi
- 14:25 Olive The Ostrich
- 14:35 Paw Patrol
- 14:58 Little Charmers
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- 20:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 20:53 Dora The Explorer
- 21:15 The Day Henry Met
- 21:21 Paw Patrol
- 21:44 Rusty Rivets
- 21:56 Bubble Guppies
- 22:19 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 22:42 Zack & Quack



BATMAN: BAD BLOOD ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



- 00:30 Spooks: The Greater Good
- 02:15 Big Game
- 03:45 Apocalypse Pompeii
- 05:15 7500
- 06:45 The Spy Who Loved Me
- 09:00 Big Game
- 10:45 Hitting The Apex
- 13:00 The Man With The Golden Gun
- 15:15 The Spy Who Loved Me
- 17:30 Batman: Bad Blood
- 18:45 The World Is Not Enough
- 21:00 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
- 23:15 Hitman: Agent 47



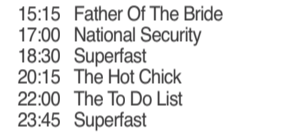
- 00:15 Race To Witch Mountain
- 02:15 The Secret Of The Magic Gourd
- 03:45 Open Season: Scared Silly
- 05:15 The Odd Life Of Timothy Green
- 07:15 Race To Witch Mountain
- 09:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean: Curse Of The Black Pearl
- 11:30 Pirates Of The Caribbean 2: Dead Man's Chest
- 14:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean: At World's End
- 17:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean: On Stranger Tides
- 19:30 Pirates Of The Caribbean: Curse Of The Black Pearl
- 22:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean 2: Dead Man's Chest



- 00:15 Pitch Perfect 2
- 02:15 Everest
- 04:30 Ghostbusters II
- 06:30 Beaches
- 08:45 Rocky IV
- 10:30 Big
- 12:15 Everest
- 14:30 The Invention Of Lying
- 16:15 Rocky v
- 18:15 Gulliver's Travels
- 19:45 Amelia
- 21:45 X-Men: First Class



- 01:30 Ride Along
- 03:15 Crazy On The Outside
- 05:00 Confessions Of A Shopaholic
- 06:45 Lovesick
- 08:15 Crazy On The Outside
- 10:00 Confessions Of A Shopaholic
- 11:45 Lovesick
- 13:15 Oscar



- 15:15 Father Of The Bride
- 17:00 National Security
- 18:30 Superfast
- 20:15 The Hot Chick
- 22:00 The To Do List
- 23:45 Superfast



- 02:00 Mood Indigo
- 04:15 Of Mice And Men
- 06:15 Every Thing Will Be Fine
- 08:15 La Bamba
- 10:15 Walking On Sunshine
- 12:00 Mood Indigo
- 14:15 Manny
- 16:00 Jappeloup
- 18:15 The Help
- 20:45 Changeling
- 23:15 12 Angry Men



- 01:30 Marco Macaco
- 03:00 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
- 04:30 Get Squirrely
- 06:00 Alpha Dogz: Pups United
- 07:30 Ghosthunters On Icy Trails
- 09:15 Mune
- 10:45 When Marnie Was There
- 12:30 Marco Macaco
- 14:00 Albert
- 15:30 Mune
- 17:00 Sava
- 18:30 Blue Elephant 2
- 20:15 Albert
- 21:45 Ghosthunters On Icy Trails
- 23:30 Sava



- 00:30 How Do They Do It?
- 00:55 Food Factory
- 01:20 Street Science
- 02:10 The Big Brain Theory
- 03:00 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 03:48 Mythbusters
- 04:36 How Do They Do It?
- 05:00 Food Factory
- 05:24 Street Science
- 05:48 Street Science
- 06:12 The Big Brain Theory
- 07:00 How Do They Do It?
- 07:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 08:14 Mythbusters
- 09:02 The Big Brain Theory
- 09:50 How Do They Do It?

- 10:14 Food Factory
- 10:38 Street Science
- 11:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 12:14 Mythbusters
- 13:02 How Do They Do It?
- 13:26 Food Factory
- 13:50 The Big Brain Theory
- 14:38 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 15:26 Street Science
- 15:50 Street Science
- 16:14 Mythbusters
- 17:02 The Big Brain Theory
- 17:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 18:40 Mythbusters
- 19:30 Mythbusters
- 20:20 How Do They Do It?
- 20:45 Food Factory
- 21:10 The Big Brain Theory
- 22:00 Mythbusters



- 00:20 Oprah's Master Class
- 01:10 90 Day Fianc?: Happily Ever After?
- 02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 02:25 Say Yes To The Dress
- 02:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Oprah's Master Class
- 04:20 Little People, Big World
- 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
- 08:30 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
- 09:20 Little People, Big World
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 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 How The Rich Live Longer
- 19:20 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
- 20:10 Little People, Big World
- 21:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
- 21:50 Little People, Big World
- 22:40 My Extreme Excess Skin
- 23:30 Return To Amish

- 17:00 The Universe
- 18:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 21:00 Ancient Aliens
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence



- 00:20 Storage Wars
- 01:10 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 02:00 Gold Hunters: Legend Of The Superstition...
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Lost Worlds
- 06:50 Time Team
- 07:40 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 08:30 Ax Men
- 09:20 Ice Road Truckers
- 10:10 Swamp People
- 11:00 Lleepu And Pitbull
- 11:50 Big Easy Motors
- 12:40 American Restoration
- 13:30 Hunting Hitler
- 15:10 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
- 16:00 Swamp People
- 19:20 Lost In Transmission
- 20:10 Mountain Men
- 21:00 American Pickers



- 00:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 01:00 Dinner At Tiffani's
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Chopped
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 07:00 The Kitchen
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 10:00 Bake With Anna Olson
- 11:00 The Kitchen
- 12:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:00 Siba's Table
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 The Kitchen
- 17:00 Bake With Anna Olson
- 18:00 Chopped
- 19:00 Iron Chef America
- 20:00 Paul Hollywood - City Bakes
- 21:00 Reza Spice Prince Of Vietnam
- 22:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
- 23:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives



- 00:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 01:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 02:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 02:50 Ancient Aliens
- 03:40 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 04:30 The Universe
- 05:20 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 06:10 The Universe
- 07:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 08:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 09:00 Ancient Aliens
- 10:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 11:00 The Universe
- 12:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 13:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 14:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 15:00 Ancient Aliens
- 16:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain



WALKING ON SUNSHINE ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL HD

Word Search Puzzles

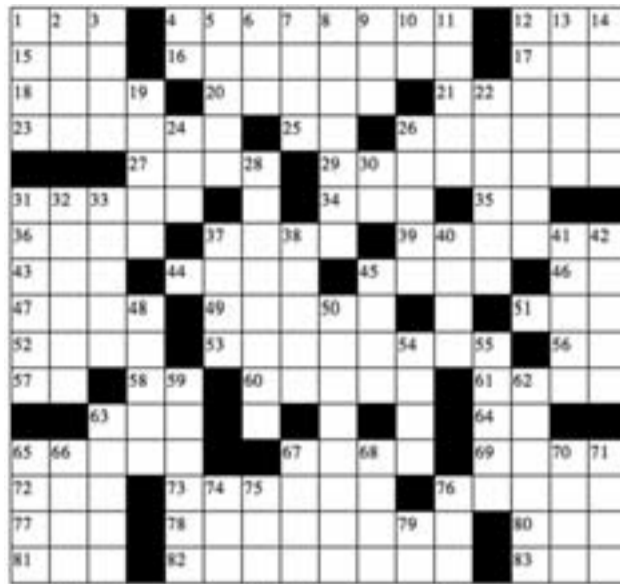
Chess

Find and circle all of the Chess words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message. Note: QUEEN and QUEENING are separately hidden and do not overlap.

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

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|------------|
| ATTACK | CHAMPIONSHIP | GRANDMASTER | PAWN |
| BISHOP | DEEP BLUE | JUMP | PIECE |
| BLITZ CHESS | DIAGONAL | KASPAROV | PROMOTION |
| BLOCKED | EN PASSANT | KIBITZING | QUEEN |
| BLUNDER | ENDGAME | KING | QUEENING |
| CAPTURE | EXCHANGE | KNIGHT | ROOK |
| CASTLING | FILE | LOSE | SACRIFICE |
| CENTER | FISHER | MATE IN TWO | STALEMATE |
| CHECKMATE | FORK | MIDDLEGAME | TOURNAMENT |
| CHESSBOARD | GAMBIT | OPENING | WIN |

CROSSWORD 1619



ACROSS

- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- The first stage of meiosis.
- The compass point that is one point west of due south.
- The vessel that contains the seeds of a plant (not the seeds themselves).
- Obstruction of the sweat ducts during high heat and humidity.
- A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
- Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
- A genus of Lamnidae.
- A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
- A bottle with a stopper.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
- German publisher of a series of travel guidebooks (1801-1859).
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- A resource.
- A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
- Not widely known.
- A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
- (Babylonian) The sky god.
- A closed sac that develops abnormally in some body structure.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Relating to or accompanying birth.
- Measure of the US economy adopted in 1991.
- An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- A literary language of Chinese Turkestan (named for one of the sons of Genghis Khan).
- The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- Feeling or showing extreme anger.
- A quantity of no importance.
- A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
- An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.

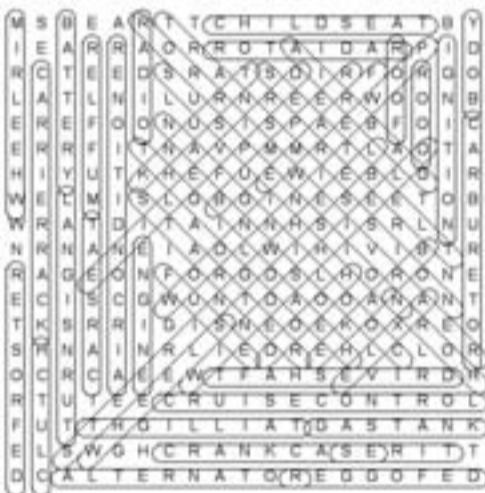
- A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A large fleet.
- The compass point that is one point south of due west.
- A manner of speaking that is natural to native speakers of a language.
- A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.
- Towards the side away from the wind.
- Saber-toothed tigers.
- The longest division of geological time.

DOWN

- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- The closing section of a musical composition.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- After noon.
- Aroused to impatience or anger.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- A member of the North American Indian people living in southern Arizona and northern Mexico.
- A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A complete metric system of units of measurement for scientists.
- (of pain or sorrow) Made easier to bear.
- (biology) Having or growing on or from a peduncle or stalk.
- Be in contradiction with.
- Any of many long-legged birds that wade in water in search of food.
- A state in New England.
- Of or like a cecum.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- Transmissions that are disseminated widely to the public.
- A woman sahib.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- Fairly small terrestrial ferns of tropical America.
- A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
- Make synchronous and adjust in time or manner.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Combined or joined to increase in size or quantity or scope.
- Greek mythology.
- Cry plaintively.
- Jordan's port.
- An Old World reptile family of Sauria.
- A three-tone Chadic language.
- A republic in the Asian subcontinent in southern Asia.
- Food that is discarded (as from a kitchen).
- Wear away.
- Lower in esteem.
- A French abbot.
- An open sore on the back of a horse caused by ill-fitting or badly adjusted saddle.
- Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on land.
- (prefix) Indicating difference or variation.
- Having or demonstrating ability to recognize or draw fine distinctions.
- The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
- The use of nuclear magnetic resonance of protons to produce proton density images.
- A fractional monetary unit of Japan and Indonesia and Cambodia.
- A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.

Yesterday's Solution

Car Parts



- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| AIR BAG | CLUTCH | GAS TANK | STARTER |
| AIR CONDITIONER | COOLING FAN | HEADLIGHT | STEERING WHEEL |
| ALTERNATOR | CRANKCASE | HOOD | SUSPENSION |
| AXLE | CRUISE CONTROL | HORN | TAIL LIGHT |
| BATTERY | DEFROSTER | IGNITION | TIRES |
| BODY | DOOR | MUFFLER | TRANSMISSION |
| BRAKE | DRIVE SHAFT | POWER WINDOW | TRUNK |
| BUMPER | ENGINE | RADIATOR | TURN SIGNAL |
| CAR SEAT | FRAME | SAFETY | WHEEL RPM |
| CARBURETOR | FUSE | SEAT BELT | WINDSHIELD |
| CARRIER RACK | | | |
| CHILD SEAT | | | |

The hidden item is: SEAT BELT WARNING LIGHT

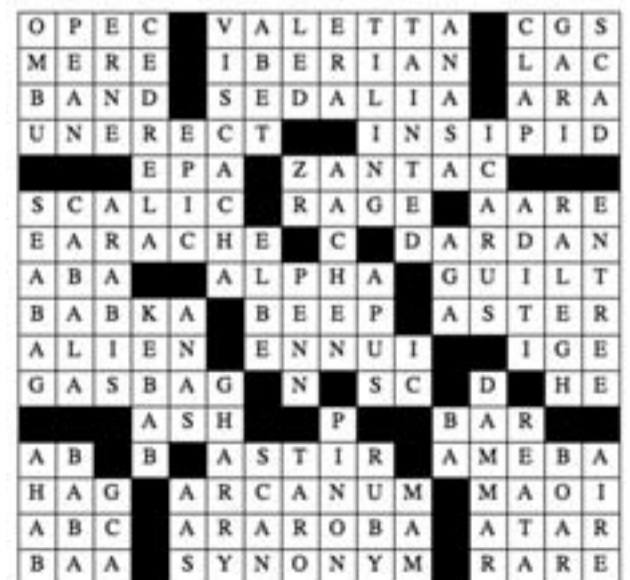
Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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



BRAZILIAN DOCTORS USE FISH SKIN TO TREAT BURN VICTIMS

FORTALEZA, Brazil: Researchers in Brazil are experimenting with a new treatment for severe burns using the skin of tilapia fish, an unorthodox procedure they say can ease the pain of victims and cut medical costs. Frozen pig skin and even human tissue have long been placed on burns to keep them moist and allow the transfer of collagen, a protein that promotes healing. Brazil's public hospitals, however, lack human and pig skin supplies and the artificial alternatives easily available in Western countries. Instead, gauze bandage, which needs regular changing - often painfully - is the norm.

Tilapia is abundant in Brazil's rivers and fish farms, which are expanding rapidly as demand grows for the mildly flavored freshwater fish. Scientists at the Federal University of Ceara in northern Brazil have found that tilapia skin has moisture, collagen and disease resistance at levels comparable to human skin, and can aid in healing. In China, researchers have tested tilapia skin on rodents to study its healing properties, but scientists in Brazil say their trials are the first on humans.

"The use of tilapia skin on burns is unprecedented," said Odorico de Moraes, a professor at Ceara University. "The fish skin is usually thrown away, so we are using this product to convert it into something of social benefit." The tilapia treatment can speed up healing by several days and reduces the need for pain medication, the Brazilian researchers say. University lab technicians treated the fish skin with various sterilizing agents, and sent it to São Paulo for irradiation to kill viruses before packaging and refrigeration. Once cleaned and treated, it can last for up to two years, researchers say. The treatment removes any fish smell.

In medical trials, the alternative therapy has been used on at least 56 patients to treat second- and third-degree burns. Patients, with limbs covered by fish skin, resemble creatures from a science fiction movie. Car mechanic Antonio Janio badly burned his arm when a cylinder of soldering gas leaked. He says the tilapia skin treatment is more effective than bandages that need to be changed every two days. The fish skin has high levels of collagen type 1, stays moist longer than gauze, and does not need to be changed frequently. —Reuters



KIEV: File photo shows Servicemen stand next to placard depicting cannabis leaves and signs reading 'March of the freedom' during a demonstration at the Ukrainian Cabinet of the Ministers in Kiev on May 20, 2017. —AFP

CANNABIS EXTRACT CUTS SEIZURES FOR EPILEPSY PATIENTS: STUDY

MIAMI: The first large-scale clinical trial of a cannabis derivative known as cannabidiol shows it was able to cut the frequency of severe epileptic seizures by 39 percent, researchers said Wednesday. Cannabidiol, or CBD, is derived from cannabis plants, but does not cause users to get high. The study in the New England Journal of Medicine comes after years of anecdotal evidence of cannabidiol's effects.

It focused on young patients with Dravet syndrome, a rare form of epilepsy. "Cannabidiol should not be viewed as a panacea for epilepsy, but for patients with especially severe forms who have not responded to numerous medications, these results provide hope that we may soon have another treatment

option," said lead investigator Orrin Devinsky, professor of neurology, neurosurgery, and psychiatry at New York University Langone Medical Center. "We still need more research, but this new trial provides more evidence than we have ever had of cannabidiol's effectiveness as a medication for treatment-resistant epilepsy."

Researchers used an experimental liquid form of CBD, called Epidiolex, which is manufactured by GW Pharmaceuticals. It has not been approved for use by the US Food and Drug Administration. A total of 120 children and adolescents, aged two to 18, with Dravet Syndrome were randomized to receive either a placebo or CBD, in addition to their usual treatment. The trial took place at 23 sites

in the United States and Europe over the course of 14 weeks. "Seizure frequency dropped in the CBD-treated group by 39 percent from a median of nearly 12 convulsive seizures per month before the study to about six," said the study.

"Three patients' seizures stopped entirely." The placebo group saw a much smaller 13 percent reduction in seizures. Most patients reported side effects, most commonly vomiting, fatigue and fever. A total of 93.4 percent of patients in the CBD group and 74.6 percent of those treated with placebo experienced side effects, which were generally reported as mild or moderate. But eight patients in the CBD group withdrew from the trial because of side effects, compared to one participant in the placebo group. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE ORIGINAL AND MOST TRUSTED NAME IN THE ARABIAN WORLD

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 Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY(25/05/2017) UPTO 1ST DAY OF RAMADAN

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Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2017

ALL ABOARD INDIA'S NEW LUXURY AFFORDABLE TRAIN

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How food stamp cuts could ripple through economy



CAIRO: Egyptians walk at a market in the Egyptian capital. Ramadan is a time for daytime fasting and lavish evening feasts, but Egyptians are scaling back preparations for the Muslim holy month this year after austerity measures fuelled decades-high inflation. — AFP

EGYPTIANS BRACE FOR AUSTERE RAMADAN

CAIRO: Ramadan is a time for daytime fasting and lavish evening feasts, but Egyptians are scaling back preparations for the Muslim holy month this year after austerity measures fuelled decades-high inflation. At a Cairo supermarket, Rana, a web designer and mother of two, said she was buying less food in the runup to the start of Ramadan this weekend, depending on the sighting of the crescent moon, a period that usually sees a surge in demand.

Other shoppers who gathered around fruit and vegetable stalls shared her dismay. In April, core inflation neared 33 percent, and rose over 44 percent for foodstuffs. "We cut down a lot on what we buy because the prices are too high," said Rana as she sifted through a pile of tomatoes. The record price increases followed the government's decision to float the pound in November—seen as a precondition for a \$12 billion IMF loan—that sent the currency plummeting. With the pound trading at around 18 to the dollar, from 8.9 before November, the price of imports and local goods that use imported components has sky rocketed.

The government also adopted a Value Added Tax and slashed fuel subsidies. Those are measures that previous Egyptian governments would not have dared to undertake for fear of sparking unrest. But President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, a

former army chief who ousted his Islamist predecessor Mohamed Morsi in 2013, has said he had no choice. The measures were necessary to get the IMF financing, which provided Egypt a lifeline as foreign reserves dwindled and investors and tourists stayed out of the country that has been rocked by years of unrest.

'Vote of confidence'

For now, Egyptians appear to be absorbing the shock, while investors are applauding the reforms. Protesting can lead to jail by the heavy handed government, and many blame the demonstrations that ousted strongman Hosni Mubarak in 2011 for years of chaos. "What is coming will not be easy, but at least the shock has been absorbed. Reactions from foreign investors have been positive," said Ramy Orabi, an economist with Pharos Holding for Financial Investments.

The International Monetary Fund, which views the reforms so far as successful, said this month it would release the second tranche of the loan in a "vote of confidence". Ratings agency Standard and Poor's said it anticipated "ongoing fiscal consolidation in Egypt over 2017-2020, supported by the three-year IMF program", affirming Egypt's B-/B foreign and local currency sovereign credit rating. But the IMF has also sig-

naled concern over inflation, with one official suggesting an interest rate hike to tamp down inflation.

Monthly inflation fell from 4.3 percent in January to 1.8 percent in April. "The monthly inflation increase is falling, and the floated currency and rising fuel prices reached a climax and should now return to a normal rhythm," Orabi said. The Monetary Policy Committee raised on Sunday the benchmark overnight deposit rate to 16.75 percent, and the overnight lending rate to 17.75 percent, each by 2 percentage points. Floating the pound reduced the trade deficit, with importers of essential goods given priority access to dollars, in a country that buys even its wheat from abroad.

In February, the deficit fell by 56 percent compared with the same month last year. The government has also sought to encourage direct foreign investment with a new law and tax exemptions, with results expected by the end of 2017. Investments had already begun to edge back towards the pre-2011 level of \$13.2 billion. Between July and December 2016, direct foreign investment reached \$7.4 billion, according to the central bank, compared to \$6.9 billion the previous fiscal year. Standard and Poor's is forecasting a growth rate of 4 percent over the next three years, spurred by investment and exports. — AFP

OIL FALLS; OPEC PREPARES TO EXTEND OUTPUT CUTS

INVESTORS HOPING FOR DEEPER PRODUCTION CUTS

LONDON: Oil prices fell yesterday as OPEC ministers met to decide how long to extend oil production cuts in an attempt to drain a global glut that has depressed markets for almost three years. One OPEC delegate at the meeting in Vienna said the group of 14 oil producers had agreed to extend cuts in production by nine months to March 2018.

Brent crude oil dropped as much as \$1.24 a barrel to a low of \$52.72 before regaining some ground to trade 80 cents lower at \$53.16 by 1100 GMT. US light crude was 90 cents lower at \$50.46. Both benchmarks were still up about 15 percent from May lows. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers, including Russia, had been widely expected to agree to extend a cut in oil supplies of 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) until the end of the first quarter of 2018. OPEC's current deal, agreed at the end of last year, only covers the first half of 2017.

Saudi Arabia's energy minister, Khalid Al-Falih, said OPEC was highly likely to roll over its existing agreement on the same terms for nine months. But that disappointed some

investors who had hoped that OPEC might reduce output even further to drain stocks more quickly. "It is a disappointment that OPEC hasn't done more to balance the markets," said Olivier Jakob, energy markets analyst at Swiss consultancy Petromatrix. "A nine-month extension of the output cuts is already baked into prices. This shows there's not much more OPEC can do." Amrita Sen, analyst at consultancy Energy Aspects agreed.

"Nine months was priced," she said. "We thought the market would sell off if it was just (an extension of) nine months." Energy consultancy Wood Mackenzie said keeping existing oil output at current levels for another nine months would result in a 950,000 bpd production increase in the United States, thus undermining OPEC's efforts to balance supply and demand. US oil production has already risen by more than 10 percent since mid-2016 to more than 9.3 million bpd as drillers take advantage of higher prices and the supply gap left by OPEC and its allies. OPEC ministers were still meeting behind closed doors by 1100 GMT yesterday. — Reuters



TOKYO: A man walks past and another rides a bicycle in front of an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei 225 index at a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Shares in Asia are higher after an overnight advance on Wall Street spurred by the latest meeting minutes from the Federal Reserve. — AP

ASIAN MARKETS GAIN AFTER FED MINUTES

HONG KONG: Asian markets rose yesterday as traders welcomed indications from the Federal Reserve that interest rates could rise next month, while oil prices rallied ahead of an expected extension to output cuts. Minutes from the Fed's May policy meeting showed board members thought that if jobs growth remains healthy with a rebound in investment and consumer spending then rates could rise "soon", which many took to mean June. While the economy has shown some signs of weakness, the bank still thinks its broad strength would justify winding down its balance sheet, essentially sucking cash out of the system and putting upward pressure on borrowing costs.

The news helped propel Wall Street to a fifth-straight day of gains, with the S&P 500 hitting another record, as the sharp losses suffered last week were reversed. Global markets tumbled in the

middle of last week on fears that crises engulfing Donald Trump could hit his economy-boosting agenda. But yesterday the Nikkei in Tokyo ended 0.4 percent higher, while Sydney put on 0.4 percent. Shanghai jumped 1.4 percent as dealers brushed off a cut in China's debt rating Wednesday by Moody's, with speculation state-backed funds were supporting the market.

Oil higher

Hong Kong added 0.8 percent, a fourth-straight gain, with the city's finance minister hitting out at Moody's decision to also downgrade the city, citing increasingly closer economic links with the mainland. Seoul jumped 1.1 percent to a fresh record after the South Korean central bank kept interest rates on hold citing an improving economy. Singapore, Taipei and Wellington also posted healthy gains. Traders are now

looking ahead to a meeting yesterday of the OPEC oil cartel at which it, along with key producer Russia, is expected to announce an extension of up to nine months—possibly 12—to an output cut.

The agreement—which came into force on January 1—sent prices surging when it was unveiled in November in a bid to address a global supply glut. "The market is waiting for the outcome of the meeting; it's clearly going to have an impact," Michael McCarthy, a chief market strategist at CMC Markets in Sydney, told Bloomberg News. "The agreement has been remarkable with the discipline showed by participants so far. In that respect, it's been a success." Crude prices, which dipped slightly Wednesday on profit-taking despite a drop in US inventories, were comfortably higher in Asia. In early European trade London rose 0.2 percent while Paris and Frankfurt each added 0.4 percent. — AFP

DOLLAR ON DEFENSIVE

TOKYO: The dollar was on the defensive yesterday after the Federal Reserve dialed down on some of the more hawkish policy expectations in the market, while the euro edged back up towards a 6-1/2-month high. Fed policymakers agreed they should hold off on raising interest rates until they see evidence that a recent economic slowdown was transitory, the minutes from their last policy meeting showed on Wednesday. The minutes were seen to indicate heightened Fed caution towards interest rate hikes and took the wind out of an earlier bounce by the dollar, which had been plagued recently by US political concerns centered on President Donald Trump. The dollar index against a basket of major currencies was down 0.3 percent at 96.972.

The US currency was pressured by lower Treasury yields, which fell on the Fed's signal of a gradual approach to raising rates. "The way Treasuries reacted to the Fed minutes shows that market participants do not consider a rate hike in June a done deal," said Makoto Noji, senior strategist at SMBC Nikko Securities. The dollar was little changed at 111.635 yen, pushed away from a one-week high of 112.130 scaled the previous day. The euro, which went as low as \$1.1168 overnight, was 0.2 percent higher at \$1.1240, making its way back towards the 6-1/2-month peak of \$1.1268 touched on Tuesday.

The common currency has enjoyed a bull run this month on factors including an ebb in French political concerns and upbeat euro zone data. "The euro is resuming its advance with the dollar sagging on the Fed's minutes. It has the momentum to surpass the \$1.1300 mark and we could see the rise continue towards \$1.1500," said Daisuke Karakama, market economist at Mizuho Bank. "That said, the market is low on incentives after the Fed minutes' release. We have to wait until the US non-farm payrolls report for the next big event, with dealers keeping an eye on any irregular Trump-related news headlines in the meantime." The Canadian dollar stood near a one-month high against the greenback after the Bank of Canada gave a more upbeat assessment of the economy than some investors expected. The central bank held interest rates steady on Wednesday as anticipated, but noted strong spending by Canadians along with a housing boom and job growth. — Reuters

INDIA INFOSYS TO HIRE AMERICANS

SAN FRANCISCO: Infosys Ltd, the India-based computer services giant yesterday touted its new strategy to hire and train 10,000 American workers over the next two years at the company's annual leadership meeting in San Francisco. Infosys is the largest employer of workers under the US H1-B visa program for skilled workers, which has been under fire as the Trump Administration moves to tighten a range of immigration laws. Many large companies hire so-called outsourcing firms such as Infosys to manage their computer operations. Infosys announced three weeks ago that it would hire 10,000 Americans, and said on Monday that it had leased 35,000 square feet of office space in downtown Indianapolis.

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb, who succeeded Vice President Mike Pence in the state's top office, and Indiana University President Michael McRobbie appeared at the San Francisco event to voice their support. Ravi Kumar, Infosys's deputy chief operating officer, said the company will be looking to hire both experienced professionals and recent college graduates at a range of skill levels. Each month, Kumar said, the company plans to put large batches of prospective employees through training courses of eight to 10 weeks that will prepare them for positions in fields like data analytics, enterprise cloud applications and cybersecurity.

Kumar said the new moves did not reflect any major change in the company's business model, with US workers being compensated at the same level as H1-B visa professionals. The company also used the meeting to highlight the launch of Infosys Nia, a new artificially intelligent service that is designed to allow IT professionals to automate more of their tasks. Infosys stressed that AI and automation are the future of technology, and that innovations in these areas will allow enterprises to be more productive without having to hire more people. "If problem solving is going to be done by machines, then problem finding is the human frontier," said Infosys CEO Vishal Sikka in his keynote. —Reuters

NEW ZEALAND EXPECTS TO SPEND SURPLUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE GOVERNMENT FORECASTS NZ\$1.62 BN SURPLUS

WELLINGTON: New Zealand expects to post a bigger-than-forecast budget surplus in 2017 and plans to invest the extra cash in infrastructure to fuel the growing economy, Finance Minister Steven Joyce said yesterday. The government predicted a NZ\$1.62 billion (\$1.14 billion) surplus in the year to June versus its prior forecast for a NZ\$473 million surplus in the December half-year economic and fiscal update.

"These surpluses are significant, but they will be needed to meet the cost of the very large new capital investment the Government has committed to," said Joyce while presenting the annual budget. Joyce announced NZ\$11 billion in spending on infrastructure including road, rail, prisons and housing over the next four years. The budget also included a NZ\$6.5 billion package to increase family incomes by adjusting tax thresholds and increasing grants as the government tries to woo voters ahead of national elections this year.

"Success breeds success," said Cameron Bagrie, chief economist at ANZ. "They've worked really hard over the past five years to turn deficits into surpluses and when you've got money in the bank it gives you options." The better-than-expected result was helped by strong corporate taxes and because some government spending on reconstruction after November's earthquake has yet to take place. The New Zealand dollar was largely unmoved after the budget was released. The government forecast a NZ\$2.85 billion surplus in the year to June 2018, versus a prior forecast of a NZ\$3.34 billion surplus.

A recovery from last year's sharp drop in global prices for New Zealand's main export earner, dairy, and booming tourism has led to unemployment hovering around eight-year lows of 4.8 percent and GDP growth at 2.7 percent. The Treasury lifted its forecast economic growth to 3.7 percent in the year to June 2018 from 3.4 percent, and 3.5 percent

in the following year from the 2.6 percent previously forecast. Economists questioned whether New Zealand's growth would be that strong, given capacity constraints, particularly in the construction sector.

Despite a strong economy that remains the envy of developed country peers, fast-rising housing costs have pressured the government to do more for first-time buyers who have been priced out of the market. Economists said raising tax thresholds was an acknowledgement that not everyone was benefiting from the fast-growing economy. "The focus of policy initiatives was very much on assisting low-income earners and low-income families," said ASB Bank economists, in a research note. Record immigration, which has fuelled rises in housing prices, is also putting a strain on infrastructure. The government previously announced a plan to build 34,000 new homes over the next decade. —Reuters

MOODY'S SLASHES HONG KONG RATING FOLLOWING CHINA CUT

HONG KONG: Hong Kong yesterday hit back at a decision by Moody's to cut its credit rating on the city, which the agency said was becoming increasingly close to mainland China. The move was announced hours after the firm downgraded China for the first time in almost three decades citing concerns about its ballooning debt and slowing economic growth. Moody's decision came as China tries to clean up a toxic brew of unregulated and risky lending that for years has fuelled the economy's spectacular growth, though some analysts doubt Beijing's willingness to quit its debt addiction.

Beijing rejected the cut, saying Moody's had used an "inappropriate" method to assess the risks facing the economy. In downgrading Hong Kong, the agency outlined the growing links between the city and the mainland, with banks increasing China-related lending, while its stock market is also linked to bourses in Shanghai and Shenzhen through separate tie-ups. The city's involvement in China's Belt and Road initiative also brings its economy and financial systems closer to the mainland, Moody's said.

"The downgrade in Hong Kong's rating reflects Moody's view that credit trends in China will continue to have a significant impact on Hong Kong's credit profile due to close and tightening economic, financial and political linkages with the mainland," it said in a statement. "The institutional features which grant Hong Kong, at present, a degree of political and economic independence-together with the SAR's intrinsic credit strengths-allow Hong Kong's rating to exceed that of China. But the two ratings, like the two regions, remain closely linked," it said.

Moody's cut Hong Kong from Aa1 to Aa2 but upped its outlook from negative to stable. Earlier it had downgraded China to A1 from Aa3 - its first since 1989 months after the Tiananmen Square crackdown-and also increased its outlook to stable from negative. It affirmed the Aa3 rating of Macau and upgraded its outlook to stable from negative. Hong Kong's Finance Secretary Paul Chan said Thursday he "strongly disagreed" with the move. "We are of the view that Moody's has overlooked the sound economic fundamentals, robust financial regulatory regime, resilient banking sector and strong fiscal position that Hong Kong has," Chan said.

He also said the Belt and Road initiative will help Hong Kong businesses enter new markets, boosting the city's economy, adding China is also a "key source of growth" for the global economy. Jackson Wong, of Huarong International Securities said that he did not see the downgrade as necessary and it would have little impact on the city. "I don't think it will affect investors' view on Hong Kong because they believe Hong Kong has a strong financial system. As of now the city, in every aspect, is still very strong and I don't see any deterioration. Hong Kong is semi-autonomous after it was handed back to China by Britain in 1997. It preserved its financial and judicial systems and enjoys liberties not seen on the mainland. — AFP



GOA: Tejas Express luxury train leaves for its first return journey between Goa and Mumbai at the Karmali railway station in the Indian state of Goa. - AFP

ALL ABOARD INDIA'S NEW LUXURY AFFORDABLE TRAIN

MUMBAI: India's passenger trains are notorious for being rickety and spartan, but the government is hoping to change all that with a new "luxury" service. The popular image of rail travel in the country of 1.2 billion people is of hundreds of people crammed into carriages, perching on roofs and hanging off the sides. But with its reclining seats and "in-rail" entertainment featuring Bollywood movies, the Tejas Express may be getting the country on a different track.

Of course it is a far cry from the luxury train recently unveiled in Japan complete with Michelin-starred chefs, solid cypress bathtubs and a cosy snug with roaring fire. But by Indian standards the new service, which also boasts wifi, a selection of games and audio channels and allows passengers to press a button to call attendants, is a hit. "It is like what airlines offer," said Adarsh Parsekar, who was on the inaugural journey on Monday. Gone are the ubiquitous tea sellers and samosa vendors who sell snacks to hungry travelers through the open windows of regular trains during platform stops.

In their place are vending machines offering coffee and a catering trolley that passes through the aisles of the cool, air-conditioned carriages, whose windows are sealed tightly shut. The doors are automatic and centrally controlled rather than manually operated and each coach is equipped with CCTV cameras. Railway officials are billing the service, which runs between Mumbai and the tourist state of Goa, as India's first luxury, yet affordable train.

Tickets in second class cost around 1,190 rupees (\$18) while in first class the price is in the range of 2,590 rupees. That is around 20 percent more than a regular train on the same route, depending on when tickets are bought, but

cheaper than the average flight. The Tejas Express takes eight and half hours to reach Goa, only marginally quicker than regular services. It is capable of reaching speeds of 200 kmh (124 mph) but rarely will due to speed restrictions on the line.

The train is scheduled to run five times a week, apart from during India's four-month summer monsoon when it will go down to just three services. If it proves popular then officials plan to expand it to other lines, likely starting with Ahmedabad in nearby Gujarat state. Monday's first run appeared to go down well with locals-although foreign visitors wanting a more traditional Indian train experience may be inclined to avoid it. "I think the Tejas Express was good and an innovative idea and I would definitely recommend it to my family and friends," said Parsekar. — AFP



MUMBAI: Indian passengers travel onboard the Tejas Express luxury train during its first journey between Mumbai and Goa in Mumbai. — AFP



CARACAS: Anti-government protesters clash with security forces blocking their march with tear gas from reaching the National Electoral Council headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela. They are also decrying Venezuela's triple-digit inflation, soaring crime and vast food shortages. —AP

BRITISH SHARES STAGNATE

PETROFAC SLUMPS AS COO SUSPENDED AMID PROBE

MILAN: British shares were little changed yesterday as investors sought fresh catalysts after a run that brought the country's main indexes to hit record highs. Data showing that Britain's economy slowed more than previously thought in the first three months of 2017 pushed sterling lower while the FTSE - which benefits from a weaker currency - came off earlier lows. By 1023 GMT, the FTSE 100 was up 0.1 percent, shy of a record high hit last week, as weakness among commodity stocks was more than offset by stronger financials and consumer stocks.

Materials and energy stocks were the biggest weight, taking a combined 3 points off the FTSE, with miners such as Rio Tinto,

Anglo American and Glencore all lower. Oil major BP also weighed, falling 0.5 percent. The biggest moves in the sector were among mid caps. Tanzania-focused miner Acacia Mining was under pressure for a second day, down 11 percent, after the country's mining minister was fired on Wednesday following an investigation into possible undeclared exports by miners to evade tax. Petrofac was the biggest faller on the FTSE 250, down 28 percent, after suspending its chief operating officer Marwan Chedid amid a fraud investigation.

Commodity stocks fell as copper prices steadied and oil prices remained lower after an OPEC delegate said the Organization of

the Petroleum Exporting Countries had decided to extend cuts in oil output by nine months to March 2018 in an attempt to drain a global glut that has depressed markets. Among top FTSE gainers was 3I Group, which rose 2.3 percent after a broker lifted the price target on the private equity and venture capital company. Some mid cap companies reported results yesterday. Intermediate Capital Group soared 11.5 percent after its full-year results, and GVC Holdings rose by 3 percent after a first-quarter update. Media group Daily Mail and General Trust fell 7 percent, set for its biggest one-day loss in more than a year after its first-half results disappointed. —Reuters

UK ECONOMIC GROWTH REVISED DOWN TO 0.2%

LONDON: Britain's economic growth slowed by more than expected in the first quarter, revised official data showed yesterday and ahead of the country's general election. Two weeks before Britons head to the polls in what is widely seen as a vote on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit strategy, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said gross domestic product growth stood at 0.2 percent in the first three months of 2017 compared with the final quarter of last year. That was the weakest quarter-on-quarter growth in a year. An initial estimate provided by the ONS in April had put first-quarter GDP output growth at 0.3 percent. Output in the fourth quarter of 2016 had stood at 0.7 percent.

"UK GDP growth in quarter one 2017 has been revised down by 0.1 percentage points from the preliminary estimate... mainly due to broad-based downward revisions within the services sector," the ONS said in its statement. While Britain's economy has performed

better than expected since the country voted last year for Brexit, recent data nevertheless pointed to weaker growth as the country negotiates its exit from the European Union. One concern is that rising inflation, caused in large part by weak sterling pushing up import costs, could see the Bank of England move to raise record-low interest rates faster than expected.

"With inflation outstripping wage growth, households will feel a squeeze on their spending power this year which is likely to limit consumer spending somewhat," Oliver Kolodseike, senior economist at the Centre for Economics and Business Research, said following the release of yesterday's data. "We have already seen the impact to some extent as reflected in a particularly poor performance in retail sales over the first quarter." May is meanwhile forecast to strengthen her Conservative Party's parliamentary majority in the June 8 election. —AFP

VENEZUELA SETS NEW EXCHANGE MECHANISM AS CURRENCY SLIDE'S

CARACAS: Venezuela has set a range for the first offer in its new DICOM foreign exchange mechanism, effectively devaluing the previous SIMADI exchange rate by at least 60 percent as the currency continues its slide. The central bank said it would accept bids for dollars between 1,800 bolivars and 2,200 bolivars during two weekly auctions. These bounds are only designated for the first "offer."

DICOM is designed as another addition to the OPEC country's complex currency controls, the fifth such plan in four years by a socialist government that has repeatedly balked at revamping its state-led economic system. Complex currency controls, enacted first in 2003 in order to prevent capital flight, are thought by many to be behind Venezuela's economic crisis, which has left millions suffering food and medicine shortages.

Most Venezuelans say they cannot get access to official exchange rates anyway and so must go to the black market, on which the bolivar currency has collapsed more than 99 percent against the dollar since President Nicolas Maduro won the presidency in 2013. A thousand dollars saved then in local currency would be worth less than \$5 now. On the black market, a dollar fetches nearly 6,000 bolivars a far cry from the SIMADI rate which on Tuesday was at 728 bolivars per dollar.

Venezuela's strongest rate, known as DIPRO, is at 10 bolivars per dollar and reserved, says the government, for essentials such as food and medicine. "The new DICOM is an efficient, rational and transparent mechanism," said economy vice president Ramon Lobo on Tuesday, showing presentations with complex flow charts explaining how it would work. The first auction will take place on Thursday with results released on Tuesday, said the central bank. Venezuelan citizens may buy up to \$500 every quarter and companies up to \$400,000 a month.

Government critics have long lambasted the Byzantine process by which Venezuelans are forced to obtain hard currency, blaming it for the crisis. The ruling Socialist Party's efforts at creating similar auction systems over the last four years have floundered because they set artificially low exchange rates that left buyers seeking more dollars than the central bank had available to sell. Various exchange mechanisms have failed to satiate demand for dollars over the last decade, and the various acronyms for the exchange rates - SITME, SIMADI, SICAD, SICAD II, DIPRO, DICOM - have come in for much criticism. —Reuters



NEW YORK: Advocates for the poor and those requiring emergency food assistance join local politicians at City Hall to urge Mayor Bill De Blasio to include \$22 million in baselined food funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) in the Fiscal Year 2018 New York City budget. — AFP

HOW FOOD STAMP CUTS COULD RIPPLE THROUGH THE ECONOMY

TRUMP PROPOSES 30 PERCENT SNAP CUT

NEW YORK: A proposal to curtail the nation's food stamp program would pinch families struggling to pay for groceries and ripple through other areas of the economy, including supermarkets and discounters, as people shuffle their budgets. President Donald Trump is proposing a roughly 30 percent reduction in the federal budget for the program formally known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

His overall budget proposal met a chilly reception from lawmakers, and is unlikely to be passed as is. But it suggests increasing work requirements for SNAP recipients, and says states should both share in the cost of the program and determine the level of benefits they provide. That would lead to fewer people in the program, or could reduce how much help they get. Last year, more than 44 million people received an average of about \$125 a month in SNAP benefits, totaling about \$66.6 billion, according to the US Department of Agriculture. How any cuts would play out across industries would depend on how people adjust to pay for food, how reliant a retailer is on SNAP spending and other factors. Here's a look at what we know.

Who uses SNAP?

SNAP households are already on extremely tight budgets. To qualify, a family of four's take-home pay can be no more than \$2,025 a month, while a two-person household can earn no more than \$1,335. More than 260,000 locations were authorized to accept SNAP

credits last year. Superstores such as Wal-Mart and Target got 52 percent of redemptions, supermarkets like Kroger got 30 percent, and convenience stores got about 6 percent, according to the USDA. The rest was split among other kinds of stores. The USDA doesn't specify how much is spent at specific retailers. But in 2013, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. told the Wall Street Journal that it gets about 18 percent of total SNAP benefits. That would have been about \$13.43 billion in 2012.

Previous SNAP cuts

It's complicated. Since food is a fixed cost, retailers have said that people used money intended for other purposes to pay for groceries after a recent pullback in the program. "They're paying cash or on a credit card if they didn't have the food stamps. And then they will give up on something else," Kroger's CEO at the time, Dave Dillon, said in December 2013. That was after the SNAP benefits that were expanded during the recession returned to their previous levels. But how companies are affected can vary and it's difficult to pinpoint the impact of any one change on sales, which can be affected by weather, competitive pressure and other factors. After the 2013 rollback in benefits, Wal-Mart blamed a 0.4 percent quarterly sales decline on the reduction, though the sales figure was down for the company's entire fiscal year. Last year, the SNAP program also underwent cuts when 22 states reinstated a three-month limit on benefits for unemployed adults who aren't disabled or raising children and

don't meet certain work requirements. That limitation had been waived by some states during the recession. Dollar General, which has said it gets about 5 percent of its sales from SNAP benefits, compared the impact of the reduction last year to what happened in 2013. "Our traffic slowed tremendously then, very similar to as it did now," Dollar General CEO Todd Vasos said last summer.

What changes for retailers?

Trump's proposal suggests that retailers pay a fee for authorization to accept food stamps. Companies currently don't pay to participate, which the proposal says fails to recognize "the significant portion of a retailer's revenue that SNAP can represent." The proposed budget estimates the fees would raise about \$2.4 billion over 10 years. It doesn't spell out how the fee would be calculated. Imposing a fee could result in smaller stores or chains deciding not to seek authorization, said Craig Gundersen, a professor of agricultural economics at the University of Illinois who has received financial support from the Walmart Foundation and grants from the agency that administers the food stamp program. That would reduce the number of places where people who use SNAP could get groceries. The National Grocers Association said the fee proposal "raised a red flag." It otherwise declined to comment on how its members might be affected by the proposed changes, but said the SNAP program plays "an important role in providing a safety net to those in need."

Effects of SNAP cuts

The government's overall SNAP spending declines when the economy improves and fewer people rely on the program. It's a situation that is the "best possible outcome," said Stacy Dean, vice president of food assistance policy at the liberal-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Dean said cutting benefits when people's financial situations are not improving could mean they use money they otherwise would have spent on needs like clothing or even medicine to make up for the gaps in their food budget.

So there's still an impact to the overall economy, she said. Putting off other purchases could affect other departments at superstores or separate retailers. A report by the USDA in 2010 also said that boosting SNAP benefits during economic downturns starts a "multiplier process" in transactions and consumption. It found that boosting SNAP expenditures by \$1 billion was estimated to increase economic activity by \$1.79 billion.

Trump's proposal could have more significant effects than the rollbacks in 2013 and last year, said Gundersen. He said shifting costs partially to states would be unprecedented and likely lead to cutbacks. That's because states may decide they can't afford to fund benefits during tough economic times, or cut benefits for other reasons. Maine Gov Paul LePage has asked to ban the purchase of candy and soda with food stamps. LePage has expressed optimism that his push could gain traction under Trump's administration. — AP

FRANCE'S DUSAUTOIR LEADS BARBARIANS AGAINST ENGLAND

LONDON: France great Thierry Dusautoir will captain a Barbarians side against England when he makes what is set to be the penultimate appearance of an outstanding career. Sunday's non-cap match at Twickenham, England's last before their two-Test tour of Argentina next month, will see the invitational Barbarians in action before they travel to Belfast for a match against Ulster on June 1. Toulouse backrow forward Dusautoir won 80 caps for France and appeared in three World Cup campaigns in 2007, 2011 and 2015. The 35-year-old is on the verge of retiring from rugby union and so ending a career that saw him captain France in their narrow 8-7 loss to hosts New Zealand in the 2011 World Cup final.

Following that agonising loss in Auckland, Dusautoir was named World Rugby Player of the Year. "I think Thierry Dusautoir's one of the great leaders

in the game," said Barbarians coach Vern Cotter, who announced his team on Thursday. "You only have to look back at the 2011 World Cup in New Zealand and the game he had there."

England's Alex Goode and Steffon Armitage will both be up against their native country.

Back-row forward Armitage effectively ended his Test career by opting to play club rugby in France, with England refusing to select overseas-based players. But Goode, one of the mainstays of London club Saracens' back-to-back European Champions Cup winning side, still harbours hope of an England recall, having been overlooked by Eddie Jones since the Australian took charge after the team's first-round exit on home soil at the 2015 World Cup.

Barbarians team to play England at Twickenham on Sunday (1400 GMT kick-off):

Barbarians (15-1)

Alex Goode (Saracens/ENG); Timoci Nagusa (Montpellier/FIJ), Yann David (Toulouse/FRA), Frans Steyn (Montpellier/RSA), Adam Ashley-Cooper (Bordeaux-Begles/AUS); Ian Madigan (Bordeaux-Begles/IRL), Kahn Fotuali'i (Bath/SAM); Facundo Isa (Lyon/ARG), Steffon Armitage (Pau/ENG), Thierry Dusautoir (Toulouse/FRA, capt); Jeremy Thrush (Gloucester/NZL), Patricio Albacete (Toulouse/ARG); Census Johnston (Toulouse/SAM), Richard Hibbard (Gloucester/WAL), Mikheil Nariashvili (Montpellier/GEO Replacements): Schalk Brits (Saracens/RSA), Ben Franks (London Irish/NZL), WP Nel (Edinburgh/SCO), Joe Tekori (Toulouse/SAM), Gillian Galan (Toulouse), Ruan Pienaar (Ulster/RSA), Robbie Fruean (Bath), Horacio Agulla (Castres/ARG). —AFP



File photo shows New South Wales Waratahs in action against Stormers.

RUGBY

BRUMBIES, WARATAHS IN TIGHT RACE FOR SUPER PLAYOFF SPOT

WELLINGTON: The remaining rounds of Super Rugby's regular season are likely to draw attention to an under-performing Australian conference in which the ACT Brumbies and New South Wales Waratahs are locked in a tight race for one playoff spot. The Brumbies and Waratahs hold the first two places in the Aussie conference with matching four-win, seven-loss records, although the Brumbies hold a four-point lead after taking six bonus points from their 11 matches. Under Super Rugby's contentious playoff format, the team that tops the Australian conference will be awarded home advantage in the first round of playoffs on July 21 or 22, even though their record might be inferior to other qualifying teams.

The Australian contenders face tough matches in the 14th round this weekend: the Brumbies will play Argentina's Jaguares in Buenos Aires and the Waratahs travel to Dunedin to play a Highlanders team on a club-record eight-match winning streak.

Overall, the Brumbies might have the easier finish to the regular season with matches against the Jaguares, Melbourne Rebels, Queensland Reds and Hamilton-based Chiefs. The Waratahs will play the Highlanders, Chiefs, Jaguares and Western Force and will need to win most of those games to qualify. "I've read a little bit this week that (the Brumbies) have the perceivably easier run home, but that means nothing to us," Waratahs center David Horwitz said. "I believe if we get four wins on the way home we will be in the finals so that's all in our control."

The Waratahs' path to the playoffs seems likely to be blocked by their two matches against New Zealand sides as no Australian team has beaten a New Zealand opponent in 18 matches in 2017. Wallabies fullback Israel Folau says the Waratahs believe they can change that record. "You've got to be confident in going over there (to New Zealand)," Folau said. "That's all we're thinking about. It's not rocket science. The challenge is, because

we play New Zealand teams, to not go into our shells."

The Brumbies received a major boost in their bid to reach the playoffs when they beat the Southern Kings 19-10 in Bloemfontein last weekend to become the first Australian team to win in South Africa this season. Rookie winger Andrew Muirhead said Saturday's win had given the Brumbies' campaign new impetus.

TURMOIL

"Most of our losses have been pretty close losses so it's good to be able to get one of those close games away," Muirhead said. "Obviously getting another win this week will put us in the right direction. The buoyant attitude of the Brumbies and Waratahs players appears at odds with the ongoing turmoil in Australian rugby and the fact that on a combined championship table, the Brumbies' 23 points would only be good enough for 10th place and the Waratahs' 19 points would place them 12th. —AP

UPWARDLY-MOBILE EXETER SEEK TO TAKE FINAL STEP

LONDON: Exeter can cap their remarkable rise through the rugby ranks by securing their maiden English Premiership title tomorrow but they will need to be at their defensive best to counter the threat of a Wasps team hoping to roll back the years.

When Wasps were winning European and domestic titles almost at will a decade ago with the likes of Lawrence Dallaglio, Josh Lewsey and Rob Howley in their ranks, Exeter were in the second tier and still playing at their cramped old County Ground.

After moving to their new Sandy Park home they eventually gained promotion to the Premiership in 2010 and, under the expert guidance of coach Rob Baxter, have been on an upward trajectory ever since.

They reached the Premiership final last year, having beaten Wasps in the semis, and though they lost to Saracens they gained revenge this season by beating the newly-crowned European Champions with a thrilling stoppage-time try in the semi-final.

That stretched their unbeaten Premiership run to 16 games - one short of Leicester's record set from 1999-2000 - and now they are approaching the final with something of a changed mindset.

"We're in a much different place," said flyhalf Gareth Steenson, who has been with the club since 2008. "Maybe last year we were just happy to be in that final. It was our first experience of a day like that. A lot of people say you have to go through finals and lose them to put yourself in good positions. We've talked a lot about building and being champions this year."

England hot winger Jack Nowell is the eye-catching cutting edge of Exeter's attack but their success is built on solidity and solidarity and they are a classic example of a team possibly being stronger than the sum of its parts and are playing with real belief.

As are Wasps, who also needed a last-gasp try to break down an obdurate Leicester in their semi-final. Wasps lost their way for a while after their success under Warrant Gatland but, rejuvenated after their relocation from London to Coventry, they have developed a team playing eye-catching rugby which was good enough for them to top the standings in the regular season.

There are question-marks over their defence but none over their attack, a point underlined by all the player-of-the-year awards raining down on flyhalf/centre Jimmy Gopperth and all the tries - a record-equalling 17 so far this season - being scored by winger Christian Wade.

They are potentially without injured back Kurtley Beale but with replacement Josh Bassett the man who scored the 78th-minute semi-final-winning try, they still look potent.

"The plan is not to kick unless it's necessary," said coach Dai Young. "That's in our DNA anyway since our first option is always to look to run."

"We've scored more tries than anyone else in the league so there's no reason we can't keep scoring them against Exeter." Now Wasps are in the final they will take some stopping, having won all 10 they have contested in all competitions since 1998 - including four Premierships - though the last of those came in 2008. —Reuters

DJOKOVIC CAN TAP INTO AGASSI'S BRILLIANT MIND: MCENROE

LONDON: Novak Djokovic's decision to work with American great Andre Agassi at the French Open could be an inspired move as he seeks to recover his lost spark, according to John McEnroe.

The Serb's insatiable appetite for grand slam titles appears to have waned since he won last year's French Open to take his career haul to 12 with motivational issues and niggling injuries contributing to a surprising slump in form.

He split with his entire coaching team earlier this month but announced after losing to Alexander Zverev in the Italian Open final on Sunday that eight-times major champion Agassi would be advising him during the Roland Garros fortnight.

It is 47-year-old Agassi's first taste of coaching

at the top level and he follows the likes of Ivan Lendl, Boris Becker, Michael Chang and McEnroe himself into the players' box.

"I was surprised, I had not heard any indication that Andre was looking to coach," seven-times grand slam champion McEnroe, who worked with Canadian Milos Raonic at Wimbledon last year as he reached the final, told Reuters.

"As far as being a brilliant tennis mind, and I know him well enough to know that he is, he loves the game and will leave no stone unturned as far as preparing for matches goes."

Agassi bloomed again after a mid-career slump that took him from world number one to outside the top 100 in 1997 and he returned to win the 1999 French Open and U.S. Open.

Taking his game to another level he went on to claim two Australian Opens after his 30th birthday, the last coming in 2003 when he was aged 32 and eight months. With Djokovic having just turned 30 himself, McEnroe can see parallels in their careers.

"Andre had a renaissance later in his career, into his 30s where he had success late in his career," McEnroe, who will be imparting his wisdom for Eurosport during the French Open, said.

"With Novak sort of hitting that peak by winning the French last year he has talked about some issues off court, some motivational issues, so perhaps Andre can give him an insight into an avenue, a way where to be more easily fired up.

"If his mind is into it he is going to win more majors." — Reuters

MURRAY STRUGGLED FOR FOCUS AFTER REACHING TOP

PARIS: Andy Murray admits he struggled to stay motivated after a scintillating surge in form that propelled him to the top of the world rankings only a few months ago.

The Briton usurped Novak Djokovic to become world number one for the first time at the end of last year, but approaches the French Open next week on a poor run.

Murray turned 30 last week but there has been little to celebrate on the court, with his latest defeat coming at the Rome Masters when he lost his second-round match to local favourite Fabio Fognini.

Rafael Nadal's red-hot form makes him the favourite at Roland Garros when the French Open begins on Sunday and Murray told AFP in Paris: "Maintaining your motivation, your focus and concentration for a very long period is difficult.

"At the end of last year I put in a lot of effort, focus and I achieved a very big goal. "I had a similar period after I won my first Grand Slam tournament at the US Open and also after I won Wimbledon for the first time, especially Wimbledon because I felt like there was nothing... That's why I was playing tennis, to win Wimbledon.

"I was the first British player to win Wimbledon for such a long time. When I was done, I was like, 'Thank God'. "You have to reset your goals. That's something I need to do now to look to the future and to keep myself motivated for the big events."

Murray is renowned for his hard work on the training court and said there is no magic ingredient if he is to win Roland Garros for the first time, having reached last year's final only to lose to Djokovic in four sets.

"Maybe at the beginning of the year, like in January and February, I was maybe still recovering a little bit from the last year. But the last two months, I just haven't played well," Murray said, speaking at an event in the French capital by his sponsor Under Armour.

"I had a small issue with my ankle, you know so practising and stuff with it may be not as good as it needed to be. "I spoke to my team about that, I wanted to get back to work. To do that, I have been training very hard, spending a lot of time practising and working on my game.

"That's the best way to get your confidence back."

BALANCING ACT

After crashing out in the third round of the Madrid Masters earlier this month to unheralded Borna Coric, Murray acknowledged his slump in form was a cause for concern. He also suffered a shock fourth-round exit at the Australian Open to Mischa Zverev in January and told AFP that it was a tough balancing act between missing tournaments to recover while also trying to retain his prized top ranking.

"If you miss a lot of tournaments your ranking drops and people say, 'He's only ranked number seven in the world, he's not that good.' "But to get the balance of playing enough to stay at the ranking you maybe deserve or the level you feel you're playing at, and to take enough rest so you're able to maintain your best level for long enough, is always a challenge." — AFP

TENNIS

NADAL TARGETS 10TH TITLE IN FRENCH OPEN GENERATION GAME

PARIS: With the world's top five filled for the first time by players over 30, Rafael Nadal is poised to tighten the old guard's Grand Slam grip by capturing an unprecedented 10th French Open. The Spaniard, written off as a contender in Paris after a quarter-final loss to Novak Djokovic in 2015 and an injury-enforced pull-out before the third round last year, arrives at Roland Garros as the new favourite to add the 2017 title to victories in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. The 30-year-old has already reached the magical 10 titles number this year at the claycourt events in Monte Carlo and Barcelona. For good measure, he also won Madrid for a fifth time, ending a seven-match losing streak, stretching back over two years, against Djokovic in the process. Nadal boasts a sensational career record at Roland Garros — 72 wins and just two defeats, to Djokovic in 2015 and an injury-affected shock loss to Robin Soderling in 2009.

That defeat to the Swede opened the door for Roger Federer to win his only French Open title. However, Federer, at 35, the oldest man in the top five, is skipping the French Open to save himself for an assault on an eighth Wimbledon. Djokovic, the defending champion in Paris, and world number one Andy Murray are struggling for form and confidence, leaving Nadal as the man to beat when the tournament starts on Sunday.

Even losing in the Rome quarter-finals to young pretender Dominic Thiem has not diminished the Spaniard's confidence. "To win four tournaments before Roland Garros, nobody has ever done this," said Nadal, who will turn 31 on June 3. "But I have matched my best performances before arriving in Paris." Nadal has also thrived on hard courts in 2017, reaching his first Slam final in three years when he lost in five sets to Federer in Australia despite being a break to the good in the deciding set.

He was also a beaten finalist against Federer in Miami while his title triumph in Madrid gave him a record-equalling 30th Masters title to add to his 14 majors.

DJOKOVIC, MURRAY STRUGGLE

Nadal's record on clay against the world's top two is also heavily-weighted in his favour — 8-2 against Murray (2-0 at



MADRID: In this May 14, 2017, file photo, Rafael Nadal plays a shot in the final of the Madrid Open tennis tournament against Dominic Thiem, in Madrid, Spain. Heading into the French Open, the men at Nos. 1-5 in the ATP rankings are all 30 or older for the first time in history. — AP

Roland Garros) and 10-5 when facing Djokovic (5-1 in Paris).

This year's Roland Garros will be the last for Nadal's coach, his uncle Toni.

In contrast, Djokovic will work with US legend Andre Agassi for the first time, having dropped his long serving back-up team in a desperate attempt to get his career back on track. Djokovic completed the career Grand Slam at last year's French Open when he also held all four majors.

On clay this year, he has at least been on an upward curve-quarter-finals in Monte Carlo, semi-finals in Madrid and a runners-up spot in Rome where he was comprehensively demolished by Alexander Zverev. Djokovic's relationship with the 47-year-old Agassi, an eight-time major winner, is limited, for the moment, to just the French Open. "Andre is someone that I have tremendous respect for as a person and as a player. He has been through everything that I'm going through," said the Serb. Murray, defeated by Djokovic in the 2016 final, has endured a wretched season by his standards with an elbow injury not

helping his cause. He lost third round in Monte Carlo, made the semis in Barcelona, was a third-round loser in Madrid before an opening defeat in Rome to Fabio Fognini. "There is no reason for it from my end. I'm just not playing good tennis," said Murray, who had his best year on clay in 2016 but who has now failed to reach a final in his last five events. World number three Stan Wawrinka, the shock champion in 2015, is also struggling with just two wins on clay all spring.

Should the likes of Nadal, Djokovic and Murray falter, then the much-hyped #NextGen, featuring the likes of Zverev and Thiem could profit. On Sunday, Zverev, 20, became the first player born in the 1990s to win a Masters title.

Thiem, the 23-year-old world number seven, stunned Nadal in Rome after losing to the Spaniard in the Madrid and Barcelona finals. However, he was crushed by Djokovic in the Rome semi-finals, winning just one game. At last year's French Open, he made the semi-finals, winning just seven games off the Serb. — AFP

MOTOR RACING

F1 TEAMS ASKED TO REVISE CARS AFTER MONGER CRASH

MONACO: Formula One teams have been told to change the rear jack points on their cars for safety reasons after a recent Formula Four accident that cost British teenager Billy Monger his legs.

International Automobile Federation (FIA) safety director Laurent Mekies wrote to the teams ahead of Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix seeking modifications to the points at which jacks are engaged to raise the back of cars at pitstops.

"Following several front-to-rear incidents over the past months in various sin-

gle-seater categories, the FIA would like all F1 teams to ensure that their rear jacking point designs cannot act aggressively during such an incident," he wrote.

"Considering the strength, shape and position of the jacking points, they may become one of the initial points of contact in a crash with another car and alter the performance of the crash structure of the other car.

"The use of aggressive designs will not be permitted from the Monaco GP onwards." Details of the note were pub-

lished on the motorsport.com website. An FIA spokesman confirmed teams had been written to, without the details being issued to media by the governing body, with a technical meeting scheduled for Friday in the Mediterranean principality.

Motorsport said some teams had designs that were deemed safe but others made revisions to ensure the jack points were no longer the first point of contact if a car ran into the back of another.

Monger, 17, had his lower legs amputated after his car smashed into the back of

another stationary on track at Britain's Donington Park circuit last month.

Monaco, although the slowest circuit on the track, has several corners that are taken blind with the risk of hitting stationary cars, although the flag marshals are famed for their skill in warning of hazards and clearing debris.

The harbourside street circuit saw fatal accidents in the 1960s and remains one of the trickiest, with cars skimming the metal barriers and speeding from darkness into the sunlight through a tunnel. —Reuters



British distance running king Mo Farah.

ATHLETICS

RUNNING KING FARAH, FELIX HEAD STAR-STUDDERED PREFONTAINE CLASSIC

LOS ANGELES: British distance running king Mo Farah and US golden girl Allyson Felix headline a star-studded field as the Diamond League's Prefontaine Classic gets under way in Eugene today with the World Championships looming on the horizon.

Farah, who completed an unprecedented 'double-double' of Olympic 5,000m and 10,000m gold at last year's Rio Games, will take to the track at the University of Oregon's Hayward Field with a fresh gust of doping intrigue swirling around coach Alberto Salazar.

Salazar, the mastermind of Nike's Oregon Project where Farah trains, has been implicated in a damning report by the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) which has cast a critical eye over methods used by the coach.

The 269-page report accuses Salazar of dangerously using drugs to boost the performance of his athletes, concluding the coach had "almost certainly" broken anti-doping rules by experimenting with infusions of the amino acid L-carnitine.

Farah angrily hit out at the suggestion of involvement in doping when the revelations first emerged in February, insisting he had nothing to hide. "I am a clean athlete who has never broken the rules in regards to substances, methods or dosages and it is upsetting that some parts of the media, despite the clear facts, continue to try to associate me with allegations of drug misuse," Farah said in February.

The full USADA report however was leaked to US outlets and published on the Internet this week, guaranteeing a fresh round of scrutiny as the third stop on the Diamond League season begins today.

Farah faces a repeat of his Rio 5,000m

final, with both silver medallist Paul Chelimo and bronze medallist Hagos Gebrhiwet, 23, in the field.

With August's World Championships in London coming into view, Eugene's powerful field will offer a preview of some of the rivalries that are likely to be on show in three months' time.

WORLD RECORD TILT?

Tonight's opening events will see Ethiopia's Olympic silver medallist Genzebe Dibaba take another crack at the world record in the 5,000m, aiming to beat the existing mark of 14min 11.15sec held by her sister Tirunesh since 2008.

The highlight of tomorrow's events sees what is being billed as the strongest women's 200m field ever assembled, with Olympic champion Elaine Thompson of Jamaica heading the line-up.

Thompson, who also won the 100m in Rio, is joined by her fellow Olympic 200m medallists, Dafne Schippers of the Netherlands and Tori Bowie of the United States.

The powerful lineup is given a sprinkling of stardust by the presence of US sprint queen Felix, the most decorated female track and field athlete in Olympic history.

The six-time Olympic gold medallist was unable to defend her 2012 200m crown in Rio last year after failing to qualify for the event at the US trials as she battled back from injury.

But the 31-year-old has opted to focus on the 200m this year and will get the chance to measure her progress against Thompson, Bowie and Schippers, who own three of the four fastest times over the distance this year. —AFP

GOLF

TIGER HAS NO PLANS TO RETIRE, 'NO HURRY' TO RETURN EITHER

NEW YORK: Tiger Woods may be in the midst of yet another lengthy recovery from his fourth back surgery but the former world number one said on Wednesday he now felt better than he had in years and had no plans to retire from competitive golf.

The surgery Woods had in April has a typical recovery time of six months and, while he still has very limited mobility, the 41-year-old American was firm in his resolve that he will again compete with the world's best golfers.

"I want to say unequivocally, I want to play professional golf again," Woods, commenting for the first time since his surgery, said on his website (tigerwoods.com).

"Presently, I'm not looking ahead. I can't wait for another two and a half to three months. Right now, my sole focus is rehab and doing what the doctors tell me. I am concentrating on short-term goals."

Woods, second on the all-time list with 14 major titles, has played sparingly since returning to golf in December after a 16-month lay-off following back surgery.

He missed the cut at the Farmers Insurance Open in January and withdrew from a European Tour event in Dubai after a first-round 77.

Woods only decided on surgery because

he could no longer live with the pain, adding that even lying down hurt and that he tried every possible non-surgical route but nothing worked.

INSTANT RELIEF

He said the fusion surgery provided instant nerve relief. "I haven't felt this good in years," said Woods, a 79-times winner on the PGA Tour.

"My surgeon and physiotherapist say the operation was successful. It's just a matter of not screwing up and letting it fuse. "I'm walking and doing my exercises, and taking my kids to and from school. All I can do is take it day-by-day. There's no hurry."

Woods also said he did everything he could to play in last month's U.S. Masters, where he has not competed since 2015, but that the pain was too great.

"The pain was post-impact when I swung the club. I figured, 'Can I handle it?' This time the answer was, 'Probably not.' That shows the effect nerve pain can have," said Woods, a four-time Masters champion.

"Obviously, it was a huge disappointment not to play. I hate to miss any major, especially the Masters, but the reality is I just couldn't play." —Reuters



NASSAU: In this Dec. 4, 2016, file photo, Tiger Woods watches his tee shot on the third hole during the final round at the Hero World Challenge golf tournament in Nassau, Bahamas. Woods said he had fusion surgery on his back because he could no longer tolerate the pain, and that he wants to get back on the PGA Tour. —AP

BASEBALL

YANKEES BEAT ROYALS DESPITE LOSING ELLSBURY

NEW YORK: Helped by a great first-inning catch that forced center fielder Jacoby Ellsbury from the game with a concussion and sprained neck, Luis Severino won for the first time in a month and led the New York Yankees to a 3-0 victory over the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday. On the first pitch of the game, Ellsbury sprinted 107 feet and raised his glove above his head to catch Alcides Escobar's fly. Ellsbury's head jarred into the wall as the ball landed in his glove and he crumpled to the field. After being checked by manager Joe Girardi and head athletic trainer Steve Donohue, he remained in the game but was replaced by Aaron Hicks starting the second. Didi Gregorius homered against Jason Hammel (1-6) leading off the third inning.

DIAMONDBACKS 8, WHITE SOX 6

Jake Lamb homered off a left-hander for only the second time this season while five Diamondbacks drove in at least one run as Arizona completed a three-game sweep and won for the eighth time in nine games. The Diamondbacks scored six runs in the fifth inning, chasing starter Jose Quintana (2-6) and building a six-run lead, but they had to hold off a White Sox rally. Jose Abreu and Leury Garcia homered for the White Sox, who were swept for the second time on a 3-7 road trip.

TWINS 4, ORIOLES 3

Jose Berrios took a two-hitter into the seventh inning while Kennys Vargas drove in two runs as Minnesota completed its first three-game sweep in Baltimore since 1996. Eduardo Escobar had two hits and an RBI for the first-place Twins, who have won six of seven and are a major league best 14-5 on the road. Berrios (3-0) allowed three runs and four hits over 6 1/3 innings, striking out seven. He was pulled in the seventh after solo homers by Chris Davis and Jonathan Schoop got Baltimore to 4-3.

BLUE JAYS 8, BREWERS 4

Ryan Goins hit his first career grand slam, one of four homers for Toronto as it swept two-game interleague series and won three straight to finish a seven-game trip. Kevin Pillar, Devon Travis and Jose Bautista hit solo shots for the Blue Jays, who have homered in four straight games. Bautista's towering shot caromed off the Miller Lite sign high above the center-field wall 400 feet from the plate. Marcus Stroman (5-2) allowed four hits and a season-high four walks but won his fourth straight game, pitching into the sixth before Domingo Santana's two-out, three-run homer cut Toronto's lead to four.

ATHLETICS 4, MARLINS 1

Sonny Gray struck out a season-high 11 over seven innings in his best start in two years and Khris Davis homered to lead Oakland. Jed Lowrie matched his career high with four hits including a pair of doubles while Matt Joyce reached base three times and scored to help the A's earn a split of the two-game interleague series. Gray (2-1) was dominant while earning his second straight win. He walked one and allowed three hits. Santiago Casilla got the last three outs for his seventh save. Edinson Volquez (0-7) allowed three runs over six innings and tied the Marlins franchise record for most consecutive losses to open a season.

NATIONALS 5, MARINERS 1

Anthony Rendon hit a three-run homer for



NEW YORK: Aaron Hicks #31 and Aaron Judge #99 of the New York Yankees celebrate the 3-0 win over the Kansas City Royals on Wednesday at Yankee Stadium in the Bronx borough of New York City. — AFP

his eighth of the season and Tanner Roark allowed a run over seven innings to lead Washington. Rendon has three homers and eight RBIs in the Nationals' two victories to open this three-game series. Roark (4-2) completed seven innings for the first time in seven starts and held the Mariners to 1 for 7 with runners in scoring position. Mariners rookie Sam Gaviglio (0-1) allowed all five runs - one earned - over six innings as the Mariners lost their fifth straight. Seattle's Robinson Cano went 3 for 4.

RED SOX 9, RANGERS 4

Dustin Pedroia waved home the tiebreaking run on a wild pitch then singled in two more during Boston's seven-run seventh inning as the Red Sox won their third straight. Chris Sale (5-2) struck out six, falling short in his attempt to become the first pitcher in baseball's modern era to strike out at least 10 batters in nine straight games in one season. He allowed three earned runs, six hits and a walk in 7 1/3 innings and received more runs of support in the seventh inning alone than in any previous game this season. Sam Dyson (1-5) faced seven batters in relief of Martin Perez and gave up four hits, three walks - two intentional - and a wild pitch without retiring a batter. Mike Napoli homered for Texas, which has lost three of four to follow a 10-game winning streak.

RAYS 5, ANGELS 2

Steven Souza Jr. homered twice to rally Tampa Bay past Los Angeles. Colby Rasmus also went deep for the Rays and Erasmo Ramirez pitched six strong innings in his third start of the season. Albert Pujols hit his 597th career home run, a two run shot in the first for

the Angels. It was his sixth of the season. Ramirez (3-0) gave up four hits and walked one while striking out two. Alex Colome got the last three outs for his 12th save. Souza tied it with a two-run homer off Ricky Nolasco (2-4) in the second. Back-to-back doubles by Corey Dickerson and Kevin Kiermaier put the Rays up 3-2 in the third. Rasmus and Souza then homered in the seventh.

ROCKIES 7, PHILLIES 2

Tyler Chatwood allowed just one hit in seven scoreless innings while Carlos

Gonzalez homered as Colorado beat Philadelphia. Chatwood befuddled the Phillies, striking out a season-high eight batters and only allowing a single by Andrew Knapp in the fifth inning.

It was the third time Chatwood (4-6) earned a win in his career while allowing just one hit. Gonzalez hit a three-run homer for the Rockies, who have won four straight. It was their major league-best 18th win on the road. The Rockies pounded starter Jeremy Hellickson (5-2) for seven runs in the third. — AP

MLB results/standings

Detroit 6, Houston 3; Tampa Bay 5, LA Angels 2; San Diego 6, NY Mets 5; Boston 9, Texas 4; Colorado 7, Philadelphia 2; NY Yankees 3, Kansas City 0; Washington 5, Seattle 1; Arizona 8, Chicago White Sox 6; Oakland 4, Miami 1; Toronto 8, Milwaukee 4; Minnesota 4, Baltimore 3.

American League					National League				
Eastern Division					Eastern Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
NY Yankees	27	17	.614	-	Washington	28	17	.622	-
Baltimore	25	20	.556	2.5	Atlanta	20	24	.455	7.5
Boston	24	21	.533	3.5	NY Mets	19	25	.432	8.5
Tampa Bay	24	25	.490	5.5	Miami	16	29	.356	12
Toronto	21	26	.447	7.5	Philadelphia	15	29	.341	12.5
Central Division					Central Division				
Minnesota	25	18	.581	-	Milwaukee	25	21	.543	-
Cleveland	24	21	.533	2	St. Louis	23	20	.535	0.5
Detroit	22	23	.489	4	Chicago Cubs	24	21	.533	0.5
Chicago White Sox	20	25	.444	6	Cincinnati	22	24	.478	3
Kansas City	19	27	.413	7.5	Pittsburgh	21	26	.447	4.5
Western Division					Western Division				
Houston	31	16	.660	-	Colorado	31	17	.646	-
Texas	24	23	.511	7	Arizona	29	19	.604	2
LA Angels	25	24	.510	7	LA Dodgers	27	20	.574	3.5
Oakland	21	25	.457	9.5	San Francisco	20	28	.417	11
Seattle	20	27	.426	11	San Diego	17	31	.354	14

BCCI SEEKS NEW COACH AS KUMBLE TERM RUNS OUT

NEW DELHI: India's cricket board yesterday invited applications for a new head coach, as Anil Kumble's contract draws rapidly to a close.

The former Test captain was appointed coach in June 2016 for a year but will automatically be considered for a renewed term. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has given other interested parties until May 31 to put in their resumes.

"The process has been initiated since the term of the current coach, Mr. Anil Kumble concludes with the Champions Trophy," the board stated in a release.

"To ensure a fair and completely transparent process, a nominee of the Committee of Administrators (CoA) will oversee the entire process

along with the Cricket Advisory Committee," it added. All applicants will be interviewed by a cricket advisory committee comprising Sachin Tendulkar, Sourav Ganguly and VVS Laxman. The advertised opening comes as India prepares to defend their Champions Trophy title in England. India will kick off their campaign in the eight-team event next week with an opening round match against Pakistan.

The BCCI had always stated Kumble's performance would be reviewed after his one-year term, but the timing on the eve of a major event has raised eyebrows.

Local media has reported that Kumble displeased some within the world's most powerful

cricket board when he demanded pay hikes for himself and skipper Virat Kohli, and extra retainer fees for Grade A players. "Kumble spoke to the Committee of Administrators (CoA), while Kohli joined on Skype, asking for 150 per cent hike in the retainer of the Grade A players," reported Indian news website NDTV.

The gutsy cricketer, who captained the Test side for just over a year after replacing Rahul Dravid in 2007, has had a largely successful run on the international coaching circuit. India has won all their five Test series under Kumble, even beating top sides like England and Australia in a hugely successful home season. —AFP



Eoin Morgan

CRICKET

MORGAN PLAYS DOWN BEN STOKES FITNESS FEARS

LEEDS: England captain Eoin Morgan moved to allay concerns over the fitness of Ben Stokes as the hosts launched their one-day international series against South Africa with a convincing 72-run win at Headingley on Wednesday. The only cloud on the horizon as England went 1-0 up in a three-match contest ahead of next week's Champions Trophy tournament on home soil was the sight of Stokes leaving the field during the second innings after suffering pain in his left knee.

Stokes, in his first England match since his most valuable player-winning stint in the lucrative Indian Premier League competition, came back on later Wednesday but did not add to his tally of two overs. Morgan, whose 107 laid the platform for England's win over the Proteas, the world's top-ranked ODI side, said Stokes had been given the all clear to bowl by medical staff but that he saw no point in recalling him to the attack with the home team on the brink of a commanding win under the Headingley floodlights. Stokes had surgery on the same knee last year but Morgan insisted all was well with his star all-rounder.

"When he came back on the field he was fit to bowl, but we managed to take a wicket when he came back on and I felt bowling him again, even though he was fit, wasn't worth the risk... give him an extra day or two with ice," said Morgan.

"It doesn't even have swelling, no significant signs of an injury, but we'll assess that in the next couple of days.

"He did the right thing, went off to get checked, because knees can leave you out for up to six months or a year if something significant does happen. "He came back on with the green light to bowl and was running around, but he understands. He's an experienced campaigner." Morgan's innings and an unbeaten

77 from Moen Ali, with the two left-handers sharing a century stand, helped England pile up 339 for six against South Africa.

'BEST WAY TO START'

They then dismissed the Proteas for 267 with five overs to spare, Ali winning the man-of-the-match award after taking two wickets with his off-spin. A delighted Morgan added: "It was the best way we could have started, a very good day at the office and a pretty complete performance. "It's very satisfying putting in a performance like that, especially against a really, really strong team and given the start they got and the calibre of batting all the way down the order," the former Ireland batsman added.

Wednesday's match took place just two days after a suicide terror attack in nearby Manchester that killed 22 people and injured dozens more. "A lot of guys were upset by what happened and we dedicate this game to them (the victims)," Ali told the BBC.

Reflecting on his own performance, the often overly modest Ali added: "I backed my game today more than I have done in the past sometimes." Meanwhile South Africa captain AB de Villiers said his side had been unable to contain an England team who plundered 102 runs from their last 10 overs after he had sent them into bat.

"England played phenomenally well with the bat, credit to Morgs for the hundred," said de Villiers.

"They dominated the bowling and manipulated us, probably 20-30 above par and we didn't bat well enough. But congrats to them. "We couldn't get a partnership going and at the end of the day we were outplayed." The series continues at Southampton tomorrow. —AFP

AUSTRALIAN CAPTAIN PLAYS DOWN TALK OF ASHES STRIKE

MELBOURNE: Australia captain Steve Smith has played down a tense stand-off in pay negotiations between the players' union and the national cricket board, saying his team is highly motivated to cut a deal and play the Ashes against England.

The Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) has rejected an offer by Cricket Australia (CA) which waters down a revenue-share arrangement that the players have enjoyed for 20 years.

CA has dug in its heels, saying players would not be offered alternative contracts if they failed to agree to terms on a new collective bargaining agreement, with the old one set to expire on June 30.

Smith said players were supportive of the ACA, who were "working really hard with CA to get a deal right", but he backed away from opening batsman David Warner's remark that Australia might not have a team for the Ashes starting in November.

"I saw the comments... Of course we want to play in the Ashes, and of course we want everything to go well there," Smith told media in London ahead of the Champions Trophy.

"It's just about making sure the guys finalise a deal and get the MOU (memorandum of understanding) sorted and everything will be fine.

"There's certainly nothing from us where we don't want to play, we certainly want to be playing in the Ashes so, hopefully, they'll get things resolved soon and everything will be back to normal."

The ACA on Wednesday said it had set up a company to manage and market player image rights and intellectual property if the pay negotiations failed to produce a deal by the deadline.

Smith said the venture had the players' support.

Both sides have blamed the other for the impasse but the ACA has requested CA agree to mediation to get back to the negotiating table. The players' union said their first request was rebuffed by CA but the board was considering a second request, ESPNcricinfo reported.

"We're expecting (a response) to come potentially this week. We need to respect their response," the cricket website quoted ACA chief executive Alistair Nicholson as saying.

"We exchanged phone calls and emails in regard to timings on that. There's contact on operational issues, but we need to respect their negotiation position, and we'll wait until we see that." —Reuters

TOTTI BRINGS DOWN THE CURTAIN AFTER 25 YEARS AT ROMA

MILAN: AS Roma's home game with lowly Genoa on Sunday will bring the curtain down on Francesco Totti's 25 years at the club but, after several months of intrigue, it is not known if the talismanic playmaker will retire altogether.

Second-placed Roma had made it clear they would not offer the 40-year-old Totti another contract but he refused to play ball until Thursday, when he finally announced it would be his last game for them.

Even then, he hinted that he could continue his career elsewhere - something previously unthinkable for one of the sport's most loyal players. "From Monday, I'm ready to go again. I'm ready for a new challenge," he said, adding that football was a passion he needed to fuel.

Roma have been criticised for their handling of what has become an uncomfortable situation for them as coach Luciano Spalletti made little use of Totti this season. With Napoli, who are third, just a point behind in the standings, there will be no time for sentiment,

either, as Roma need to win to make sure of finishing runners-up to Juventus and qualifying for the Champions League group stage next season.

Third place would mean going into the final play-off round, where Italian teams have been eliminated in six of the last eight seasons - with Roma themselves among the victims last August. Napoli visit mid-table Sampdoria on Sunday.

An exasperated Spalletti said earlier this month that he would not have become Roma coach if he knew it was going to be such a complicated issue and said his job was to manage Totti as a player, not his legacy.

Roma sporting director Ramon Rodriguez "Monchi" reiterated recently that Totti had agreed this season would be his last, while chief executive Umberto Gandini said the player's contribution would "continue in another way" next term.

Until Thursday, however, Totti had refused to confirm or deny suggestions that he wanted a further season at his beloved club.

NO RESPECT

Supporters of Roma's arch-rivals Lazio, who share the Olympic Stadium, could not resist a dig at their neighbours. "You have not received respect from either your fans or your club. We tell you sincerely that we are sorry," Lazio's hard-core fans said in a statement addressed to Totti on Monday.

"We are sorry, we would never have allowed a player like you to be treated like this. We would never have silently observed what they are doing to you." Sampdoria forward Fabio Quagliarella said Totti "doesn't deserve to be treated like this" while former Juventus forward Alessandro Del Piero was saddened.

"I'm sorry that this story has had some sad moments," he said. "The truth is known to Totti, Spalletti and the club, and only they can answer certain questions." Zdenek Zeman, one of 16 coaches Totti has played under at the club, added: "I haven't heard that he wants to leave...Do I think he'll leave? No, I hope to see him on the pitch again." —Reuters

ENRIQUE SEEKS ONE LAST TROPHY BEFORE LEAVING BARCELONA

MADRID: Luis Enrique is finally saying goodbye to Barcelona, with one last chance at a trophy. The Luis Enrique era in Barcelona ends after the Copa del Rey final against Alaves tomorrow, when the coach could cap his three-year stint with a ninth trophy out of a possible 13.

It would be a fitting farewell for him nearly three months after his surprise announcement that he was leaving. "It would be a special title," Luis Enrique said.

The former Barcelona midfielder has won nearly everything as the coach, since replacing Gerard Martino in 2014. He led the team to the treble of the Spanish league, Copa del Rey, and Champions League in 2015. He achieved the league-Copa double in 2016, and began this season with the Spanish Super Cup title, their only trophy so far.

It hasn't been Luis Enrique's best season with Barcelona, which was eliminated in the quarterfinals of the Champions League, and lost the Spanish league to Real Madrid last weekend.

"I'm happy and more than satisfied for all the years that I've enjoyed with this club," the 47-year-old Luis Enrique said. He announced in March he was leaving so he could get some rest.

"I came here to be a leader and I've been one. I'm leaving when I think it's the best time to do it." His other titles included the 2015 European Super Cup and the 2015 Club World Cup.

Barcelona has yet to lose a Copa del Rey home-and-away series since he took over, a run of 12 straight triumphs. "We are all thankful for these three years (with Luis Enrique)," captain Andres Iniesta said.

"We have to win one last title to finish the best possible way." Barcelona has been in the Copa final in seven of the last nine seasons, including the last four. It has won it a record 28 times, including the last two.

Alaves will be playing in the final of a major tournament for only the second time in its 96-year history. The other was the UEFA Cup 16 years ago, when it lost to Liverpool 5-4 in extra time. Alaves' only winner's trophy is for Spain's second division. It was a promoted club in Spain's top division this season after 10 years in the lower divisions, including four in the third tier. It finished ninth in the Liga.

Alaves enters the Copa final boosted from having beaten Barcelona 2-1 at Camp Nou at the beginning of the season.

The coach touted to replace Luis Enrique at Barcelona is Ernesto Valverde, who left Athletic Bilbao this week. An official announcement is expected next week. —AP



STOCKHOLM: Manchester United's English striker Wayne Rooney celebrates after the UEFA Europa League final football match. Rooney's international career looks over after England's all-time top-scorer was yesterday left out of the squad for next month's World Cup qualifier. —AFP

ROONEY LEFT OUT OF ENGLAND SQUAD

LONDON: Wayne Rooney's international career looks over after England's all-time top-scorer was yesterday left out of the squad for next month's World Cup qualifier against Scotland and a friendly in France.

The 31-year-old striker has lost his place at Manchester United and was similarly omitted from Gareth Southgate's England squad announced in March, although he was carrying a knee injury at the time.

Fit-again Rooney, who made a brief appearance in Manchester United's Europa League final win over Ajax in Stockholm on Wednesday, had hoped to end his international career by captaining England at next year's World Cup in Russia.

But this now looks an increasingly forlorn hope for Rooney, England's record goalscorer with 53 goals and their most capped outfielder with 119 appearances for his country.

His United career could also be over having fallen down the pecking order under manager Jose Mourinho.

"We have a lot of players playing exceptionally well in the area of the pitch that Wayne plays," Southgate told thefa.com.

"I said last time (in March) that he was a

bit short of matches—he's had some matches now but we've got players that have done really, really well for us in Adam Lallana and Dele Alli.

"I can't dress it up any other way—other players are in really good form and deserve to keep their place."

Southgate did not rule out entirely a recall for Rooney, who is three years younger than veteran striker Jermain Defoe, who has been retained despite Sunderland's desperate season seeing them relegated.

"You never write off a player of Wayne's quality and I'm sure that, next season, he'll be back to playing," said Southgate.

"He's finished the season a bit better and I'm sure he'll take that into next year."

SOUTHGATE PROTECTS RASHFORD

Yesterday's squad announcement saw Southgate opt for the likes of Harry Kane, Jamie Vardy, Marcus Rashford and Defoe in attack.

The 19-year-old Rashford, who started for United against Ajax, has inherited the mantle of "teen sensation" that used to belong to Rooney and his inclusion in the senior squad

means he will not feature for the England under-21s in this year's age-group European Championships.

Southgate said it was to protect him from early burnout that he had prevented the pacy forward going to the under-21 tournament.

"He's in the senior squad on merit and has been for a year. The question then is: could he have gone with the under-21s after that? In my opinion, no," said Southgate.

"He's a 19-year-old player who's had an exceptional season and by then will have had virtually 60 matches by that point.

"Somebody has to protect him. Somebody has to manage the development of a young player, and that has to be my call."

Kane's call-up is the first time the Premier League's golden boot winner has been included in one of Southgate's England squads, with the Tottenham Hotspur striker having missed all six of the manager's previous matches in charge through injury.

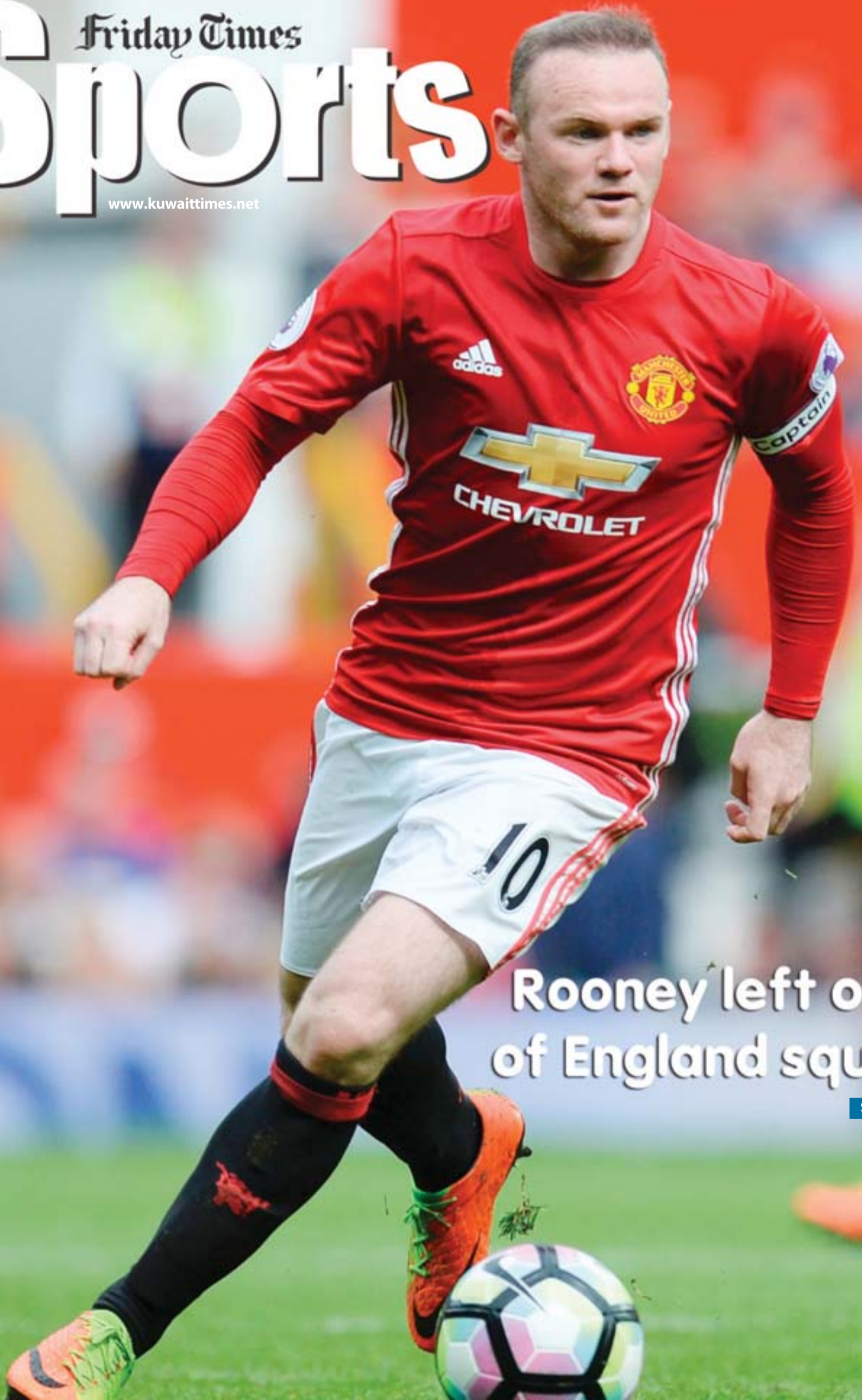
England face oldest rivals Scotland in a World Cup qualifier at Glasgow's Hampden Park on June 10 before travelling to Paris for a friendly three days later. —AFP

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**Rooney left out
of England squad**

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