

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 17453

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Body found in freezer remains unidentified

Victim's acquaintance says she was mistreated, unpaid

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The body of an Asian woman thought to be a Filipina that was found inside a freezer in an apartment in Maidan Hawally is yet to be identified. Mohammad Noordin Lomondot, Consul General of the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait, said the body is still being thawed, as it was in the freezer for more than a year. "The body has to undergo a series of forensic examinations before it can be identified. It is still too early to claim that the body is that of a Filipina. Until it is checked, we cannot confirm anything," he told Kuwait Times.

An acquaintance of the victim who spoke

to Kuwait Times on the condition of anonymity said she ran into the victim - whom she called 'Joana' - towards the end of 2016. "She was complaining about her salary. She said she was not paid for months and food was very limited," the acquaintance said, quoting the alleged victim, whom she described as very petite.

Asked if she was sure the victim was a Filipina, she replied in the affirmative. "Yes, she's a Filipina. Her employer was a friend of my boss too. They never had any housemaids except Filipinas. I also met their previous Filipina housemaid, who ran away because she couldn't stand

the attitude of her employers," the acquaintance, who lives nearby, told Kuwait Times.

The body of the unknown woman was discovered after police entered the flat with a court order. The apartment had been closed since its renters left Kuwait in November 2016. Police allegedly found fatal stab wounds on the woman's neck and torture marks

across her body though no cause of death has been officially confirmed. Authorities identified the victim's employers as suspects in the case, a security source said. The two suspects - a Lebanese man and his Syrian wife - who were renting the flat, are wanted

for questioning in the case. The man allegedly was also wanted on several financial cases and had a warrant issued against him.

Philippine Ambassador to Kuwait Rene Villa told Kuwait Times, "We are coordinating with the police, and while there is such a report, we are not sure about the nationality (of the deceased)."

Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte recently implemented a ban on Filipinos working in Kuwait, citing cases of abuse and mistreatment including a high profile case of a Filipina domestic helper committing suicide. There are about 265,000 Filipinos in Kuwait, of which 165,000 are working as domestic helpers.

Exclusive



The business of luck: Illicit gambling in Kuwait

By Chidi Emmanuel and Sahar Moussa

KUWAIT: Across the GCC, millions in cash is being made outside the law. Betting and gambling have become thriving illegal businesses hiding in plain sight. Kuwait is unlike other countries where illicit gambling and betting evoke images of the mafia, mobsters and threats of violence. While the underground still exists, technology has made illegal gambling much more accessible. The same mobile

phones and computers we use in our offices - or to connect with families and friends - are now being used to gamble outside the law.

Kuwait Times took a look at the high-stakes world of illegal gambling and betting, where some people cash in, others lose money, while some face prison terms. Some people bet on sporting activities, others bet on dogfights. Nasser, a 30-year-old Kuwaiti, told Kuwait Times he used to bet on dogfighting. — (See Page 6)

Local

Expats' wives left behind



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai
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While we are busy talking about the status of expat men and their problems here, we tend to forget or disregard that many of these men have women left behind at home. The wife of an expatriate is helpless in the face of this unjust situation due to the long absence of her husband, as she waits for a call or a visit.

I agree that financial needs and economic crises can lead to many spouses moving out in search of a better life, but the absent father puts all his efforts into earning money without considering the impact of his absence from his wife and children. The material demands of the family cannot be a substitute for psychological needs. There is a negative impact in the absence of an observer of their actions, who ignores the burdensome responsibilities on the mother of caring for a family without a father or husband.

This article is not an accusation against any particular nationality, and I believe men differ in behavior and character. Some men are truly sincere to their distant wives despite the fact that their miserable material circumstances do not help them bring their wives and children here. So they leave their wives for years in the hope of an improvement in the conditions and laws to allow the husband to bring his wife to Kuwait.

Some expat men find such a situation is cheaper for them, and at the same time may take another wife here. Such a man is likely to have children, and over time may forget the first wife and their children, making this woman bitter and compelling her to seek divorce.

In many poor countries, divorce is difficult and expensive for several reasons, because this woman may not have enough money to hire a lawyer who can follow the matter across continents, and the difficulty and complexity of legal procedures, especially in the absence of the husband from his homeland. I say this because of what I hear or read through mails from women who have suffered from the absence of their husbands for many years, or the inability of the expat husband to bring his wife to Kuwait due to the high cost of living and residency fees or the difficulty of getting a visa.

I wonder how a family can remain cohesive if the circumstances of life forces the head of the family to travel for years outside his country. The absence of a husband for a year or two or more is a long period of separation, which is expected to have negative effects not only on the strength of the relationship between spouses, but on the children as well. The result of this unstable family situation will have negative repercussions on the society as a whole.

It is strange that there is not much talk about the status of women whose husbands are working abroad. It is regrettable that there is not enough interest from civil societies and women's associations to study the negative impact of the absence of the father from his family for years.

In Kuwait we also have tens of thousands of women who leave their families - their husbands and their children - to work here. We forget how much these women and especially their children suffer due to these extended separations. This is no light topic and needs much thought and discussion and more from us all.

Half Kuwaiti?

IN MY VIEW

By ARS

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Half Kuwaiti, what exactly does this mean? In essence this means I have one foreign parent and one Kuwaiti parent, but to me it means much more. Growing up, I often questioned the notion that I shared two ethnicities and identities as a whole. I've grown up in Kuwait and spent the better part of my life here, but am I really part of the culture or the youth here?

This conflict of identity first arose when I was six. I was at school and I was told that I had no right to the Kuwaiti culture, as my mother was Kuwaiti and not my father. I shocked and confused, now at the age of 17 that shock still resonates within me, like a death. How could someone tell me what I could and could not be at such a young age?

It helped shape my view of society and life from the most fragile of years. How is it that a half Kuwaiti who has a Kuwaiti father was better than me and deserved more rights and recognition? How is it that a country so open and genuine could limit and bondage its women from passing their rights onto their children?

Not only do I consider myself Kuwaiti, but I consider Kuwait my home, no matter how many times I'm told that it is not. It begs the question of why the over 6,000 children of Kuwaiti mothers and foreign fathers are still not recognized in a country so modern and known for its humanitarian causes. I say humanity should start at home.

I put forward a simple message of acceptance by all Kuwaitis alike, by the government and by the very foundations of our society. Pillars of which are dear to my heart. I hope that more women such as those within the majlis come forward in fervent support of female rights.

In total, approximately 6,000 children are stated to be half Kuwaiti by the Ministry of Interior. The ministry of youth affairs has often been questioned about the rights of children born to Kuwaiti mothers, many of whom have been divorced by their husbands and left destitute. This not only impacts the lives of these women and their children, but impacts the way in which these children view Kuwait as a whole. The constitution states equality among citizens in obligations and rights, this is further reaffirmed by article 9 which states 'the family is the foundation of society; its mainstays are religion, morals and the love of country. The law shall preserve its entity, shall strengthen its bonds and shall, under aegis, protect mothers and infants'. How is it that the constitution reiterates the calls of many Kuwaiti women, but no change is seen?

Article 8 of the Kuwait constitution states 'The State shall preserve the pillars of society and shall guarantee security, tranquility and equal opportunity to all citizens'.

This is contradictory to the current restraints placed on Kuwaiti women. Kuwaiti women also outnumber

Kuwaiti men by approximately 3 percent as stated by the last Kuwaiti census by the Central Statistical Bureau. Restrictive and unclear laws on nationalization and citizenship further reduce the rights of women and their children in Kuwait.

The nationalization law of 1959 is arguably outdated, it states 'A child born to a Kuwait father irrespective of the place of birth is a Kuwaiti citizen'. While in some cases children of Kuwaiti mothers have been able to get benefits such as educational scholarships to go abroad. Laws to aid such children such as the 2017 update of the labor law states 'Children of Kuwaiti mothers will have labor preferences and right to both public and private sector jobs equal to that of Kuwaitis'.

Although new proposal have been put forward by politicians such as Safaa Al Hashem, children of foreign fathers and Kuwaiti mothers remain marginalized and disenfranchised. New attempts must be made to amend and develop laws for half-Kuwaiti children. In contrast with other GCC members such as the UAE, who as of 2012 gave women the right to pass their nationality to their children upon the age of 18. As a

leader of humanitarian efforts on the global stage, with a vast and developing economy shouldn't this issue be given priority?

Parliamentarians such as Safaa Al Hashem and Nabeel al-Fadhel have been ardent supporters of women's rights within Kuwait. Both have been prominent figures within this debate. Hashem known for her often direct

comments on male superiority has often baulked at the notion of women being inferior by law and practice. The constant residency renewal faced by many children of Kuwaiti mothers and foreign fathers is a further point of controversy and hypocrisy.

By law children of Kuwaiti mothers are to be treated as Kuwaiti citizens until the age of 21 but in actuality many are seen as complete foreigners. Nevertheless the vast majority of these children have lived in Kuwait all their lives and know nothing else.

Is patriotism only for those of Kuwaiti fathers? Is acceptance not a human right? How long will we allow the suffering socially of these children to continue? Nonetheless, many children of Kuwaiti women whose fathers have divorced their mothers remain without recognition from then government, although in breach of the Nationality Law in place.

Recognition is no longer a point of necessity for myself and the many half-Kuwaitis in my situation that I know, but acceptance most certainly is. Ironically, colleagues of mine who have Kuwaiti fathers and foreign mothers often face the same dilemma of fitting in within Kuwaiti society. They face the same ethnocentrism and segregation. I ask when will it be acceptable to be who we are and how we were created? Kuwait is my home and my country as much as it may be someone's with a Kuwaiti father and that cannot be discredited.



I shocked and confused, now at the age of 17 that shock still resonates within me

Local

Romance is bad for you!



IN MY VIEW

By Jeri Al-Jeri
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I was very satisfied when finally, our English literature professor admitted that romance is fake and can never be real. In fact, part of its defect is that it is supposed to be fantastical. I felt a huge burden lifted off my shoulders, because I felt perfectly normal to be me and not a knight in shining armor. But how is it that a Muslim from the Arab world living in the Arabian Peninsula can be so invested emotionally in what or how English literature differs in its inherent concepts? What does it mean?

In my final courses at AOU, students were taught this so-called secret that part of the British Empire's educational leadership is intellectual domination. Our teacher took it upon himself to theorize that farm peasants were obligated to be able to read but not to the point of becoming critics of the socioeconomic reality of their nation. Therefore, famous, or infamous rather, authors were induced financially to repeat a naive formula of a hero saving the helpless, powerless, thoughtless woman



from a one-dimensional villain. Due to such repetition, the masses became stuck with such a scenario. It is the norm in Hollywood, Bollywood and even in videogames.

From the Latin word *romanicus* "romance" is defined in dictionaries as a love affair that is not long-lasting or serious and is associated with wonder and mystery. Two married grownups aren't that mysterious to each other after a week at least, and the "they lived happily ever after" part is just a curtain hiding actual psychological developments between any normal couples that encompasses power struggles and sometimes anger management techniques and the rest of real feelings that make Cinderella wish she had a heel strap.

But why should we take this whole matter of romance so seriously when it is just temporal entertainment? Minds are shaped by language, and hearts are led by feelings - this encapsulates all what literature entails. Unfortunately, the empire still rules the masses epistemologically. And it is a real shame that such romantic perfectionism has destroyed households, depressed hormone-crazed teens and wasted billions of dollars and dinars on forms of arts that are made for intellectual suppression, rather than liberating people to peruse the real joys of discovery.

Life in itself is interesting when seen for what is it, not how we think it should be. Isn't time to stomp on our "pink glasses"?

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The ordinary 'blues' around us



By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

The delightful blue that colors the skies of Kuwait in the winter and spring is the thing that rejoices residents the most. Those who live in this land know that the summer of Kuwait, where the blue of the sky merges into an endless desert, has no details. Perhaps many people do not realize that their favorite color is blue, in all its shades. This color, which has beautiful and happy meanings, is applied to paint many things which we encounter on a daily basis without even being aware of them.

Blue is associated with cleanliness and purity, so it is mostly chosen for recycling containers, drinking fountains and swimming pools. It's also the color of wellbeing, notably seen in nonprofit organizations' logos, such as PETA, FAIRTRADE, ABOLISH Article 153, UNICEF and other organizations concerned with human welfare, health, sport and the protection of children and animal rights.

When someone wants to seek psychological stability, they search for the sea and the blue sky, or choose to spend most of their time in the house where the blue color is prevalent (as I do in mine). This color has the ability to bring tranquility and physical and mental harmony.

So, what you are waiting for? Make the blue color part of the office or the living room. And plan a weekly therapeutic visit to the sea, before the return of the burning sun of Kuwait from its short vacation!

— Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi



Local

Friday, February 9, 2018



“ Blue is associated with cleanliness and purity, so it is mostly chosen for recycling containers, drinking fountains and swimming pools. ”



Local

The business of luck: ILLICIT GAMBLING

in Kuwait



By Chidi Emmanuel and Sahar Moussa

Across the GCC, millions in cash is being made outside the law. Betting and gambling have become thriving illegal businesses hiding in plain sight. Kuwait is unlike other countries where illicit gambling and betting evoke images of the mafia, mobsters and threats of violence. While the underground still exists, technology has made illegal gambling much more accessible. The same mobile phones and computers we use in our offices - or to connect with families and friends - are now being used to gamble outside the law.

Kuwait Times took a look at the high-stakes world of illegal gambling and betting, where some people cash in, others lose money, while some face prison terms. Some people bet on sporting activities, others bet on dogfights. Nasser, a 30-year-old Kuwaiti, told Kuwait Times he used to bet on dog-fighting. "I have a dog (a pit bull). When I took my dog for a walk, the dog used to fight with other dogs in the street. This gave me a good feeling - and I kind of liked it - so I started asking and looking around for a place dogs can fight for money. It wasn't long before I found out that there is a big betting community here," Nasser said.

At a chalet, Nasser was introduced to a group of gamblers who are into the underground dog-fighting business. "There were around a 100 people who came to watch, bet and gamble, as the dogs fought for their lives. People bet with whatever they have, and depending on their luck, the winners take it all," he explained. Nasser's friend owns a big farm where the dogs are raised and trained for these kinds of fights.

"The fight usually begins in a neutral place.

There is a referee (a trustworthy man) who everyone respects and trusts. Before the fight begins, there is always an agreement between the dogs' owners on how many rounds the dogs will fight - and how much money they will wager. The fight usually lasts until one dog is declared the winner. This occurs when one dog fails to fight, dies or when the referee ends the fight," he said.

Apart from betting, people find dogfights entertaining too. "You can find all kinds of people in this community - doctors, students, civil servants. Some people bring their children just to watch and be entertained. It is like watching a boxing match. There was a day I made KD 6,000 in one of the tourna-

ments. Sometimes I lose everything if the dog I bet on loses the fight. People bet up to KD 100,000 and even with their cars and other valuable assets," he added.

Lotteries and online gambling are popular too

In Maliya and Mirqab in Kuwait City, it appears to be business as usual, with the area bustling with activity. At one corner of a shopping complex in Maliya, Kumar and his friends could be seen drinking (tea and coffee) and eating as they celebrated a good week. This is not about a promotion or salary increment - it's about the easy money they made from betting and gambling.



“

Dog fights, lotteries, online gambling...you can find it all here.

”

At the rear of the complex, one can see money and pieces of paper exchanging hands. "Last week was great. We won and got paid, that's why we are happy," Kumar said excitedly. "This betting is about a set of numbers - from 1 to 99. If you can get six out of the six lucky numbers correctly, you can make KD 100 for every KD 1 you staked. We also bet on cricket games and scores," Amit explained.

In Mirqab, Kamal, another Asian expat, told Kuwait Times how he made KD 500 last week through betting. "We do everything here (in Kuwait). We bet on cricket matches and other sports events. Some people will bet on which team will win, particular overs and the scores. If you are lucky, you can win big. The more money you bet with, the more you win or lose depending on your luck," he said.

Even though Kuwaiti law forbids gambling, such activities and illegal web betting are on the rise. Illegal gambling operators and their agents are becoming increasingly smarter - they go online to avoid detection. Fueled by the advancement of mobile technology and widespread use of smartphones and tablet computers, gambling platforms are more readily available to the public.

Stan, an African expat, claimed he made euro 1,200 via online betting. "I had been losing money, but last week I nailed it. I wagered on two English Premier League matches and won. Actually, it is becoming a bad addiction for me. I really want to quit," he said.

Some gamblers in Kuwait don't seem to know the legal implications of their actions. Some claimed they are not committing any crime, while others are oblivious of the gravity of the offence. "We are not violating any law. We just gamble among ourselves," Kamal said. According to legal practitioner Osama Ameen, article 205 of the Kuwait penal code stipulates imprisonment (up to one year or a fine) for convicted gamblers. "A lottery is also considered as gambling because the law defines gambling as act in which the probability of earning and losing money depends on luck," he said. Gamblers in Kuwait now use safer options (online services) to place bets with offshore online bookies or mobile casinos. Security officers have been cracking down on gambling activities across Kuwait. Authorities are conducting intense investigations amid reports that gambling on the Internet is growing. Media reports have said a large number of young people of different nationalities are gambling on social networking sites. According to the reports, they play poker, blackjack, roulette etc.

In a recent report, an Asian expatriate was arrested for organizing an illegal lottery in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. According to security sources, police received information that the suspect was collecting large sums of money from Asian expatriates in order to conduct a lottery, which was scheduled for Jan 16. Police raided the location where the lottery was to be held, arrested the organizer and confiscated the money and lottery tickets.

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Local

Relations with Iraq should reach 'utmost level': First Deputy PM

Amir's wisdom, status will boost KICRI • Meet shines light on stability in Iraq

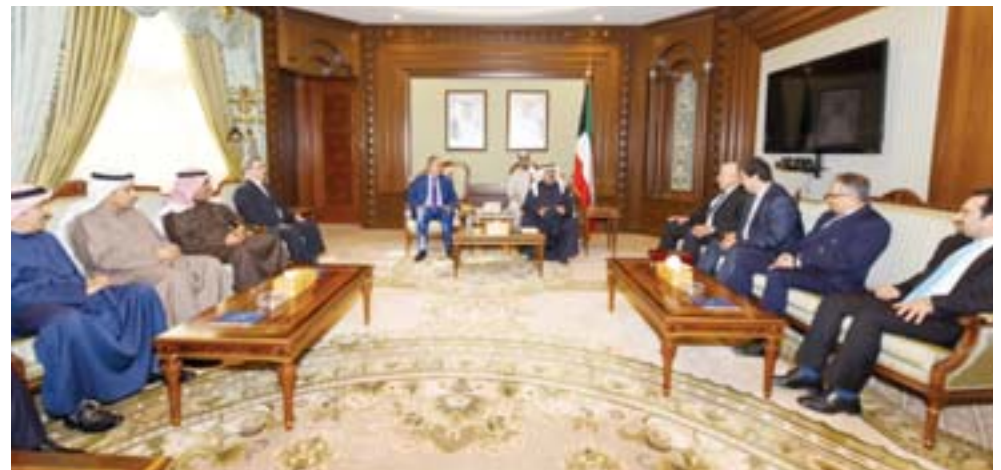
KUWAIT: Relations with Iraq should reach its "utmost level", said First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday. "What combines the two countries is huge. Relations should grow further in order for us to become real partners to build the future," said Sheikh Nasser during his reception of a delegation from the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate. They are in the country as part of the media delegation covering the Kuwait International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) from Feb 12-14.

During the reception, Sheikh Nasser underlined HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's constant support for Iraq, for bilateral relations to flourish even more. Kuwait's "Silk Road" project; in the northern part of the country, came according to a strategic vision in a bid to turn it into an international investment area - in cooperation with Iraq and Iran - which, in turn, would require a joint responsibility to build future for generations to come, the Kuwaiti senior official noted. KICRI is to be co-chaired by Kuwait, Iraq, the UN, the EU and the World Bank.

Meanwhile, HH the Amir's wisdom and ex-

perience, as well as global status, would provide momentum to KICRI, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said yesterday. The Amir has instructed the conference be provided with all facilities and facilitations needed in order to champion its cause of alleviating suffering of the Iraqi people, said a ministry statement quoting the minister. His remarks came during his reception of Moayed Al-Lami, chief of the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate. Lami valued the Amir's constant support to Iraq, as well as expressing content over the overwhelming hospitality the delegation has received so far.

The conference sends a message to the international community that restoring stability in Baghdad is an international obligation, Kuwait's deputy prime minister and foreign minister said yesterday. Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's remarks came in a meeting with the contingent of Iraqi journalists. He attributed the staggering turnout for the conference to the magnitude of an event that aims to bring normalcy to a country devastated by years of warfare. "Iraq is an intellectually rich nation with all the capabilities needed to ensure an effective reconstruction



KUWAIT: First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah receives a delegation from the Iraqi Journalists' Syndicate. — KUNA

process," the Kuwaiti foreign minister pointed out. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed hope that the conference, "which has been in the works for quite some time," would meet its objectives, fresh off Baghdad's military victor

over the so-called Islamic State (IS). The Kuwaiti minister applauded the Iraqis for bringing about the downfall of IS, which he described as a thorn in the side of the international community. — KUNA

UNRWA extols Kuwait's support

KUWAIT: Media Adviser of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Adnan Abu Hasna said yesterday that Kuwait has played an important role in supporting the agency since 2010 with about \$90 million. Abu Hasna told KUNA that Kuwait is one of the most important supporters of the agency, establishing many schools and clinics in various areas, both in Gaza and other areas such as Syria, Lebanon and Jordan, where many Palestinian refugees are present.

He added that Kuwait has provided nearly \$90 million in aid to UNRWA since 2010, including \$30 million to its budget, as well as its response to the agency's last call to assist the Syrian refugees. He explained that the most important assistance provided by Kuwait was in 2015 when it provided \$30 million following lack of funding for the agency, a matter which could

have contributed to the closure of many schools, stressing that with Kuwait's help, the financial crisis was resolved and schools remained open.

Abu Hasna pointed out that Kuwaitis are always interested in supporting human development through focusing funding towards education and health, adding that Kuwait is one of the most important countries that helped UNRWA facilitate its tasks towards Palestinian refugees in Gaza, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. He referred to the agency's call, which was launched from Geneva to raise \$800 million, adding that Kuwait was the first country to respond to the appeal and provided nearly \$1 million to the Palestinians in Syria.

On the other hand, he said that the United States annually provides UNRWA about \$350 million, but this year it only provided \$60 million, causing a deficit of \$290 million. He stressed that this deficit threatens the work of the organization and its presence because it provides services to approximately 5.3 million Palestinians and 500,000 students in schools, which is a serious situation, "so we turn to all to collect donations from all charitable organizations and others to support the work of the UNRWA". — KUNA

Lebanese prez thanks Kuwait for its support

BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun yesterday expressed gratitude to Kuwait for its support to Lebanon and its people in line with instructions by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Amir has keenly and repeatedly affirmed his endearment towards the Lebanese people, the president said during a reception of a delegation representing the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) at the presidential palace.

Projects that will be financed by the Kuwaiti fund constitute yet a new manifestation of the brotherly relations bonding Kuwait with Lebanon, Aoun said, cited a presidency statement. The statement quoted KFAED General Director Abdulwahab Al-Badr as expressing readiness to examine a number of ventures Lebanon is planning, in coordination with the local Development and Construction Council.



BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun receives (KFAED) General Director Abdulwahab Al-Badr. — KUNA

HH the Amir, during president Aoun's recent visit to Kuwait, gave instructions to follow up on the projects executed by the fund. Badr assured the president that the fund was following up on projects in northern Lebanon, namely the exit system at Al-Abboudiyah border checkpoint and a water sewage venture in the Shouf mountains. He also touched on a road project linking the resorts of Jeita and Faraya as well as renovating wheat silos at Beirut port. On future projects, Badr mentioned a drinking water venture in Mount Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Nabil Al-Jiser,

chairman of the local construction council, said in a statement to journalists that Kuwait's contributions are seen in all sectors in the country. The meeting between the president and KFAED's officials was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Lebanon Abdulal Al-Ginaee and the Regional Director of Arab States at KFAED Abdullah Al-Saqer. Kuwait has long funded a chain of projects in Lebanon including construction of hospitals, clinics and mosques, in addition to dispatching many convoys carrying relief aid to locals and Syrian refugees. — KUNA

Kuwait TV presenters told to wear national, Islamic attire

Cigarette prices to rise?

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait TV has urged all male TV presenters to wear dishdashas when appearing onscreen and female presenters to wear decent clothing. A directive circulated to various TV departments said program presenters and guests will have to wear national attire and female presenters will have to observe Is-

lamic values and Kuwaiti traditions in everything onscreen, including their clothes, which have to be decent.

Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports circulating on various social media yesterday said prices of some cigarette brands will increase effective Sunday, Feb 11, 2018. According to the reports, the price increase will vary between 130 to 300 fils.

Separately, Denmark has been ranked the first worldwide in

terms of the best country to raise children, said the US News & World Report 2018, noting that the study evaluated 80 countries (including some Arab countries but excluding Kuwait) by ranking them according to 65 attributes. Among these were economic influence, power, citizenship and quality of life, which collectively helped determine each country's success as a modern nation.

PM visits border check post



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visits the Al-Buhaith border check post (top) and attends a luncheon in his honor in Abdaly (above). — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday inspected the Al-Buhaith border checkpoint. He was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, other ministers, senior officials from the Premier Diwan and ranking interior ministry officers. A luncheon was held in honor of the prime minister by Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Azayez farm in Abdaly. — KUNA

Couple jumps from balcony to escape fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A fire broke out in a Salmiya building, said security sources, noting that firefighters rushed to the scene and found an Asian couple injured in the building yard after they jumped from the second floor balcony to escape the blaze. The building was evacuated and the fire was controlled. Further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fire.

KFSD inspects Avenues systems

Kuwait Fire Services Directorate inspected The Avenues to check fire extinguishers in the fourth phase of the project and make sure they match KFSD guidelines, said KFSD's deputy director for prevention affairs Maj Gen Khaled Abdullah Fahd, noting that the inspection included extinguishers, water pumps, ventilation systems, gas fittings and firefighting systems.



KUWAIT: A fireman extinguishes a blaze in a Salmiya flat.

Body found near highway

KUWAIT: An unidentified body of a male believed to be an Asian was found near Kabd highway. Security sources said the body was referred to the coroner for further investigations about his identity and cause of death.

Drivers fight

Four Asian drivers were arrested in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh for fighting over customers, said security sources, noting that while arguing over the right to ferry the passengers, the men lunged at each other until police arrived and apprehended them all.

Missing girls found

Capital detectives arrested two non-Kuwaiti sisters who had been reported missing by their families over a month ago. Security sources said the girls were spotted wandering late at night and on asking for their IDs, they said they did not have any. On checking their fingerprints, detectives identified them and found they had been reported to have fled their family house in Jahra. The girls were referred to Waha police station for further investigations.

Drugs arrests

A GCC national who had been wanted for a four-year prison sentence was arrested in Amghara with hashish joints. Meanwhile, two citizens and a bedoon were arrested for wearing women's clothing, makeup and wigs. Security sources said the suspects also had illicit pills. The suspects told detectives they were on the way to a party. — Al-Rai/Al-Qabas



Convictions upheld for Israelis in murder of Palestinian teen

Top Trump aide resigns after battery allegations

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DAMASCUS: A member of the Syrian civil defense carries the body of a child from the rubble after a reported regime air strike in the rebel-held town of Jisreen, in the besieged Eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus, yesterday.—AFP

US-led strikes on Syria forces kill 100

Regime warplanes rain bombs on rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta

BEIRUT: The US-led coalition said yesterday it killed at least 100 pro-regime fighters to fend off an attack on its allies in eastern Syria, in one its deadliest confrontations yet with forces backing Damascus. The initial attack was carried out by forces loyal to President Bashar Al-Assad on key oil and gas installations in parts of Deir Ezzor province controlled by US-backed Kurdish forces.

The clash came against a backdrop of escalating tensions between Washington and Damascus over an uptick in the suspected use of chemical weapons by the regime and allied militia. Meanwhile, regime warplanes rained bombs for a fourth consecutive day on the rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta, outside Damascus, where the death toll soared to 170 since Monday.

According to the US Central Command, coalition advisers were present in the area that was attacked by pro-government forces in Deir Ezzor province late on Wednesday.

"The coalition conducted strikes against attacking forces to repel the act of aggression" against its own personnel and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces hosting them, it said.

Oil and gas target

"We estimate more than 100 Syrian pro-regime forces were killed while engaging SDF and coalition forces," a US military official said on condition of anonymity. The SDF and the coalition targeted the attacking forces with air strikes and shelling after "20 to 30 artillery and tank rounds landed within 500 meters (yards) of the SDF headquarters location," the official said.

According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which only confirmed 45 dead among pro-regime forces, the initial attack took place near Khasham. The head of the Britain-based monitoring group, Rami Abdel Rahman, said the aim of the attack appeared to be the capture of a key oil field and a major gas plant in an SDF-held area.

The Omar oil field, one of the biggest in Syria, had a pre-war output of 30,000 barrels per day, while the Conoco gas field had a pre-war capacity of 13 million cubic meters a day. Regime and SDF fighters were involved in several skirmishes in the area last year, as they each conducted parallel operations against some of the Islamic State jihadist group's last bastions.

22 civilians die in Ghouta as toll rises



Damascus and the US-backed Kurdish militia once worked towards the same goal in the region but they were never allied and the death of the IS "caliphate" has further strained an already frosty relation. Syrian state media confirmed that dozens were killed in the clash but appeared to deny the forces were army soldiers, describing the victims as "popular forces".

According to the Observatory, the forces that launched the attack on SDF positions were local tribal fighters loyal to Assad and Afghan Shiite militia fighting alongside the regime.

CENTCOM said the attack occurred eight kilometers (five miles) east of the "Euphrates River de-confliction line," referring to a boundary agreed by Russia and the US, with the former's area of operations west of the river and the latter's to its east. IS jihadists were flushed out of their last strongholds in eastern Syria and over the border in western Iraq late last year.

But the SDF continues to hunt down surviving jihadists who have reverted to a clandestine insurgency.

Washington has recently ramped up the rhetoric against Damascus over its alleged use of chemical weapons, including on a number of occasions in January and February. Chlorine-filled munitions are believed to have been fired several times on rebel-controlled areas, including the enclave of Eastern Ghouta. —AFP

Convictions upheld for Israelis in murder of Palestinian teen

Teen beaten up, burned alive by Jewish gang in 2014

JERUSALEM: Israel's supreme court yesterday rejected an appeal by three members of a Jewish gang convicted of kidnapping, beating and burning alive a Palestinian teenager in 2014.

The decision upholds life sentences for two of them and a 21-year jail term for the third over the chilling attack that was part of a spiral of violence ahead of the 2014 Gaza war.

Israeli settler Yosef Haim Ben-David was convicted of leading the assault on Mohammed Abu Khdeir, 16, that shocked Israelis and Palestinians alike. The two others have not been named since they were minors — 16 — at the time of the crime. Ben-David, whose claim of insanity was rejected, was 31 when he was sentenced to life in May 2016.

All three were present in the court yesterday. Ben-David, appearing haggard in a prison uniform and with a scruffy beard, did not speak. Ben-David had previously claimed to be the “messiah,” but judges ruled that he was mentally competent.

They said that at the time of the killing he was “in full command of his faculties ... and that the mental issues he suffered from” did not mean he was not responsible for his actions, according to

a justice ministry statement on the ruling.

Abu Khdeir's father welcomed the court's decision, but again called for the assailants' homes to be demolished as Israel routinely does for Palestinian attackers.

“These people are like Nazis,” Hussein Abu Khdeir told journalists outside the courtroom. Abu Khdeir's mother, Suha, cried after the decision was announced. Israel's top court last year rejected the demand that the state demolish their homes, saying the petition was filed too late.



Khdeir's killing was part of a spiral of violence

Revenge plot

Abu Khdeir's killing was part of a spiral of violence that led to a 50-day war in the Gaza Strip in summer 2014. He was kidnapped from Israeli-annexed east

Jerusalem on July 2, 2014 and beaten, with his burned body found hours later in a forest in the western part of the city.

A forensic report showed smoke in his lungs, indicating he was alive when set alight. It was seen as revenge for the killing of Israelis Naftali Frenkel, Gilad Shaer and Eyal Yifrach, who were abducted from a hitchhiking stop near the flash-point West Bank city of Hebron.

Israeli authorities said the suspects had decided to kill an Arab in revenge and equipped



JERUSALEM: Suha Abu Khdeir (left), the Palestinian mother of a teenager who was beaten and burned alive by three members of a Jewish gang in 2014, reacts at Israel's Supreme Court in Jerusalem yesterday. Israel's supreme court rejected an appeal yesterday by the three Jewish gang members convicted of kidnapping, beating and burning alive the 16-year-old Mohamed Abu Khdeir in 2014. —AFP

themselves with cable ties, petrol and other materials before randomly choosing Abu Khdeir.

Israel immediately blamed the kidnappings on militants from Hamas, the Islamist movement that controls Gaza, rounding up hundreds of

suspected members in the West Bank. The killing of Abu Khdeir was followed by an uptick in rocket fire from Gaza, and the launch on July 8 of a full-scale Israeli military operation against the Palestinian enclave. — AFP

Turkey says to host Syria summit with Russia, Iran

ISTANBUL: Turkey said yesterday it is planning to host in Istanbul a new three-way summit on Syria with the presidents of Russia and Iran, as the three powers seek to salvage increasingly fragile efforts to end the fighting. The meeting—the second such tripartite summit on Syria—would come as Turkey presses on with its Olive Branch offensive against Kurdish militia inside northern Syria in an area where Russia has an influence.

No date for the summit was announced but Turkey is currently engaged in intense diplomatic activity with visits to Ankara by US national security advisor H.R. McMaster and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson expected in the coming days.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin agreed to hold the summit in Istanbul alongside Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, in telephone talks yesterday, a Turkish presidential source said. Putin had already hosted a similar three-way summit in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in November.

In its readout of the talks, the Kremlin did not confirm the holding of the summit but said new contacts between the three sides were discussed.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov added a summit had been discussed but no date had been decided.

'Managing the tempo'

Without giving details, the Turkish statement said Putin and Erdogan also discussed the three-week Turkish offensive against Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia in the Afrin region of Syria. Some Russian officials have expressed concern about the Turkish offensive but analysts believe it would never have gone ahead without at least the tacit assent of Moscow.

An added complication came with the deadly shooting down of a Russian war plane—resulting in the death of the pilot—by Islamist rebels over the neighboring Idlib province at the weekend.

Moscow has applauded Turkey for its assistance in helping bring the body of pilot, Major Roman Filipov, back home for burial. But analysts have noted that no Turkish air strikes against the YPG have taken place in the days since the incident, indicating that Russia has likely closed the air space.

“Russia (is) managing (the) operational tempo of Olive Branch by opening/closing air space,” commented prominent Turkish security analyst Metin Gurcan on Twitter. The Turkish government has insisted there is “no problem” with air space.

'Just a warm-up'

The summit, if it takes place, will be the latest example of the increasingly intense contact between Ankara, Moscow and Tehran over Syria. Russia and Tehran are the key backers of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Turkey, however, has backed the rebels seeking Assad's ouster in a seven-year conflict that has left more than 340,000 dead. Yet Turkey, Iran and Russia have sponsored peace talks in the Kazakh capital Astana that have set out the creation of four so-called de-escalation zones: Idlib, the greater Damascus area, the southern region of Daraa and the city of Homs. But Erdogan again ruled out talks with Russia's ally Assad, saying: “What will we talk about with a murderer who killed his one million of his citizens?” —AFP

Russia meddled in US election, says George W Bush

ABU DHABI: Former US president George W Bush accused Russia yesterday of meddling in the US 2016 presidential election, calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a “brilliant tactician”. Bush, interviewed on stage at a business conference in the capital of the United Arab Emirates, said there was clear evidence that the Russians had meddled but whether that affected the outcome of the election was another question.

“But they meddled and that is dangerous for democracy,” he said, adding that Russia had done the same thing during the Cold War and was adept at trying to manipulate opinion in the United States and Europe. “Putin is a brilliant tactician who has the capacity to detect weakness and exploit it,” Bush said. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied accusations by US intelligence officials and others of interfering in foreign elections, including the 2016 US vote.

In an apparent criticism of the immigration policies US President Donald Trump, Bush called for changes in US immigration rules, saying it was important to recognize that the United States had a history of welcoming people regardless of their religion or where they were born. — Reuters

International

Thousands of Palestinians jam Gaza border, opened by Egypt

Cairo cites security concerns for keeping frontier closed

GAZA: Thousands of Palestinian travellers gathered at Gaza's border crossing with Egypt yesterday hoping for a brief chance to leave after Cairo temporarily opened a frontier it largely keeps closed as it battles an Islamist insurgency on the other side. Israel also maintains tight restrictions on its border with the Gaza Strip, meaning the 2 million Palestinians who live there are rarely able to leave the densely-populated enclave in which the Hamas Islamist movement is the dominant armed force.

In a wheelchair and helped by his wife and daughter, 74-year-old Awni An-Najar said at Rafah crossing that he sought to enter Egypt for treatment of his broken hip. "Patients must be allowed to travel freely. I want to be able to walk again," he said. Egypt tends to open the frontier temporarily a few times a year, usually with short notice and little explanation. The latest opening began on Wednesday with no advanced announcement at all.

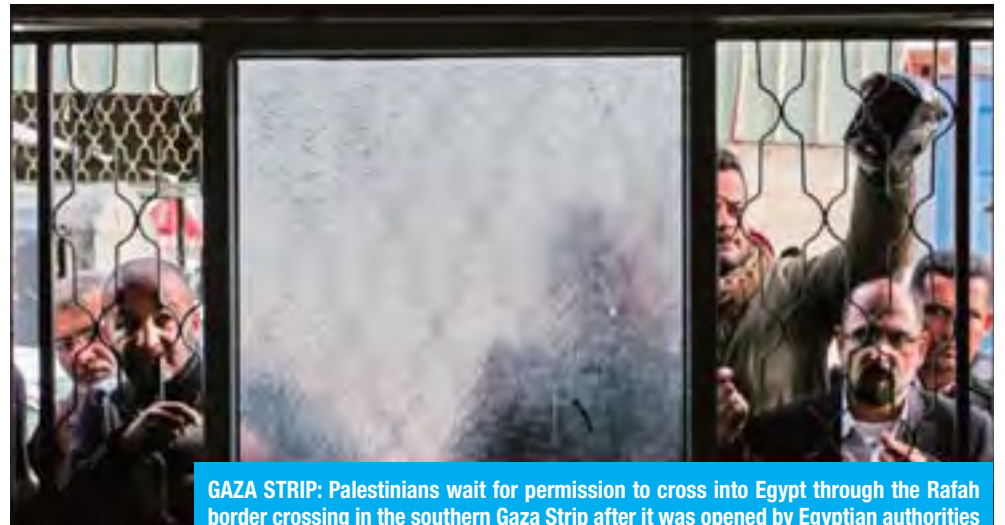
The Palestinian embassy in Cairo "extended gratitude to President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi for his care

to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people," it said in a statement. The Egyptian foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It was only the second time in more than a decade that the border was opened while unarmed security officers of the Western-backed Palestinian Authority (PA), rather than Hamas, guarded the Palestinian side. A reconciliation agreement in October between Hamas and the rival Fatah movement of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas gave the PA control of the Rafah crossing for the first time since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007.

Egypt opened the border briefly in December. Gazans have hoped PA control could be a step towards the permanent reopening of the frontier, ending a state of de facto blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt for security reasons, which has destroyed the territory's economy leaving Gaza with the world's highest unemployment rate according to the World Bank. So far, Egyptian authorities say a permanent opening of the border depends on se-



Israel maintains tight restrictions at Gaza border



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians wait for permission to cross into Egypt through the Rafah border crossing in the southern Gaza Strip after it was opened by Egyptian authorities for humanitarian cases on Wednesday. — AFP

curity on the Egyptian side, where they have been battling an increasingly violent Islamist insurgency.

Because of the lack of prior notice, only several dozen travellers arrived in time to cross on Wednesday. A far bigger crowd turned up yesterday. Rafah

will close again after nightfall on Friday. Egypt has accused Hamas in the past of aiding the Sinai insurgents, an allegation the movement denies. In recent months, Hamas has stepped up security along the border. — Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Saudi Arabia executes 4 Pakistanis for murder, rape

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday executed four Pakistani men convicted of raping and murdering a woman and raping her teenage son, the interior ministry said. The men were also convicted of stealing jewelry and cash after entering the woman's home in Riyadh and raping and strangling her, according to a ministry statement cited by the official SPA news agency. Saudi Arabia has executed 20 people since the start of 2018, according to an AFP count. Last year, 141 people were put to death in the kingdom, where executions are carried out by the sword.

UN appeals for \$1bn for Boko Haram-hit NE Nigeria

ABUJA: The UN yesterday said more than \$1 billion in funding was needed this year to help millions of people affected by Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency in northeast Nigeria. The humanitarian coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon, said "life-saving emergency assistance to the most vulnerable" in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states was the "immediate priority". Funding would also go towards improving the quality of programs already in place and increasing the ability of local agencies to respond in the longer term, he added.

Romanian ex-finance minister convicted

BUCHAREST: A former Romanian finance minister and current adviser to the government was sentenced to eight years in prison yesterday for taking some 1.4 million euros (\$1.7 million) in bribes. Darius Valcov was accused of helping a Romanian company win public tenders in exchange for backhanders when he was a local mayor in 2009-2013. — AFP

'We are in a war': Cameroon unrest confronted

YAOUNDE: Daniel was in his home in the village of Bole in Southwest Cameroon on Feb. 2 when he heard gunfire and a commotion. Moments later, his house was ablaze, flames licking the walls.

Despite the fire, Daniel dared not leave. Outside, dozens of Cameroonian soldiers charged with putting down a separatist insurgency had descended from trucks, opened fire on fleeing residents and set buildings alight, he said. Daniel's brother Ekoda, who was outside the house, said he saw seven dead bodies. Army spokesman Colonel Didier Badjeck said claims that houses were burned and people shot in Bole last week were "totally false", and he denied that soldiers were mistreating residents in other villages detailed in this story.

"We are sure that the soldiers are respecting human rights. If we don't do that we are very foolish," Badjeck told Reuters by telephone, adding that any misconduct by soldiers is dealt with strongly. "If you want success, you have to have the population on side."

A government spokesman did not respond to requests for comment. The Bole raid, corroborated by other witnesses, echoes near identical operations by the army in villages across Southwest Cameroon. The accounts shed new light on the fast deteriorating security situation in Anglophone Cameroon and on the tactics used by the military to quell a growing secessionist movement that has killed 22 soldiers and policemen in a campaign to split Cameroon's English-speaking

minority from Yaounde.

The fighting has become a threat to President Paul Biya's longstanding rule and to stability in the oil- and cocoa-producing Central African country where presidential elections are scheduled for October. There are about five million Anglophones in Cameroon, a nation of 24 million. Most of Cameroon's oil is found off the coast of the Anglophone region, according to the International Crisis Group. Interviews with a dozen residents and separatist leaders in the English-speaking Southwest and Northwest regions reveal another worrying trend for Biya: the crackdown is increasing support for a growing number of armed groups bent on secession. "They are fighting against us because they don't want us to separate from them, but we have already made up our minds," said Daniel, who spoke from his bed in a nearby hospital, medical gauze covering his left arm, his face charred. Daniel escaped the burning house when the soldiers left, but not before suffering severe burns. Daniel, like most residents quoted in this story, asked that his full name not be used for fear of reprisals.

Attacking wholesale

There have been secessionists ever since Anglophone Cameroon gained independence from Britain in 1961 and voted to join in a federation with neighboring Francophone Cameroon, which had won independence from France a year earlier. French-speaking politicians held sway in government and the

promise of equality for Anglophones faded. They were forced to drive on the right hand side of the road, adopt the metric system and take on the CFA franc currency.

In 1972 President Ahmadou Ahidjo declared an end to federalism, erasing regional autonomy completely. His successor, Paul Biya, centralized things further when he came to power in 1982. He removed the second star from the national flag which represented the Anglophone regions.

The separatist movement remained on the political fringe for decades until late 2016, when English-speaking lawyers and teachers protested peacefully against having to work in French. The government cracked down hard and civilians were killed in clashes with police. The crowds grew in response, and so did the violence. In October 2017, more than 20 were killed during marches, according to Amnesty international. The military fired live rounds on protesters from helicopter gunships. By mid-2017, many who had previously wanted just a return to federalism were calling for secession. At marches, protesters waved the blue and white flag of Ambazonia - the separatists' proposed new state. An armed group called the Ambazonian Defence Force began attacking government soldiers in Anglophone regions. "In 2016, people were calling for non-violence, and it was the same for most of 2017. But in 2018, people no longer see that rhetoric as holding water. They have to defend themselves," said Tapang Ivo Tanku, an Anglophone activist based in the United States. The formal secessionist leadership, known as the Government of Ambazonia, has distanced itself from attacks on soldiers. Its leader, Ayuk Tabe, was arrested last month in Nigeria and was deported to Yaounde. — Reuters

Victims accuse Abdeslam of 'mocking' Belgian terror trial

BRUSSELS: Lawyers for police officers hurt in a shootout with Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam accused him of scorning Belgian justice after he refused to appear at his trial when it resumed yesterday. Abdeslam, 28, accused judges of being anti-Muslim, refused to answer questions, and proclaimed he put his "trust in Allah" on the first day of the high-security trial on Monday. The Belgian-born Frenchman of Moroccan descent then refused to attend Thursday's resumption of the hearing into the March 2016 gunbattle in Brussels in which three police were wounded, and was represented instead by his lawyer.

"His attitude and his opportunism tire me," Tom Bauwens, a lawyer for two of the elite police officers involved in the raid in the Forest district of Brussels, told the courtroom. "He will mock our rule of law, he will mock everybody. He will not recognize your court, he will not recognize your laws," he said.

"But he will nevertheless ask for a lawyer to plead his case before you," Bauwens added. Abdeslam—who was transferred to France following his arrest—was brought to Brussels from a jail near Paris under heavy security for the trial on Monday.

'Appeal for clemency'

His Belgian lawyer, Sven Mary, told the court yesterday that he would to continue to represent Abdeslam after his client refused to attend the second day of the trial. The court did not sit

on Tuesday or Wednesday.

"Yes, Madame", Mary replied when asked by the chief judge, Marie-France Keutgen, if he still wished to defend his client. Abdeslam's co-defendant Sofiane Ayari, a 24-year-old Tunisian, appeared alone in the court yesterday. Prosecutors have asked for the maximum available 20-year jail sentences for both Abdeslam and Ayari, who face terrorist-related charges of attempted murder and possession of banned weapons over the shootout.

"On the sentence, we appeal for the court's clemency," Ayari's lawyer Laura Severin said.

The court may take several weeks to deliberate before handing down a verdict. Prosecutors accuse both Abdeslam and Ayari of attempting to kill police, though they believe there were only two weapons, one in Ayari's hands and the other with in Mohamed Belkaid, an Algerian who died in the shootout.

One of the three police officers injured in the battle, described only as agent nine, is still suffering the after-effects, his lawyer said. "He is suffering so much from his brain lesions that he no longer knows what to do," Bauwens told the court.

Silence not 'criminal'

"He has epileptic fits. He has loss of vision and balance. It's the reality. Agent number nine did his work and all he asks for is for you the court to continue the work he started," he said.

Abdeslam, the last surviving suspect from the Islamic State cell behind the November 2015 Paris attacks, had said on Monday that his decision to refuse to answer questions was his method of defense, and that "silence does not make me a criminal." But Belgian media quoted legal experts questioning how best to defend a client who had also called the court's judges illegitimate and alleged that all Muslims were mistreated by the justice system.

Mary initially represented Abdeslam after his arrest in Brussels, which happened three days after the gun battle, but then dropped the former bar owner because of his attitude.

However Mary then took Abdeslam back on as a client ahead of the trial and managed to delay the hearings from December last year to have more time to prepare.

Prosecutors have said that DNA links Abdeslam to the apartment in the Forest district of Brussels where the shooting took place, but not to the weapons themselves that were used.

The Belgian trial is a prelude to a bigger one that Abdeslam will face in France at a later date over the November 13, 2015, Paris attacks claimed by the Islamic State group, in which 130 people were killed. Abdeslam's brother Brahim was one of the suicide bombers. Abdeslam's DNA or fingerprints were allegedly found at five sites in Belgium used by the cell behind both the Paris and Brussels attacks. —AFP

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International

Merkel's last-resort coalition faces a chorus of skepticism

Conservatives criticize sacrifice of finance ministry

BERLIN: Angela Merkel's conservatives and their Social Democrat (SPD) partners faced a chorus of skepticism yesterday as allies and opponents alike criticized a loveless coalition deal that some said showed the German chancellor's time was coming to an end.

The deal, reached in record time to end months of political paralysis after Merkel had failed to form a coalition with two smaller parties, faces its first test when the SPD's membership vote next month on whether to ratify a deal many never wanted.

But Merkel's camp was also forced to defend a deal that sees the conservatives cede the crucial finance minister post in exchange for a fourth term in office for the woman who

has dominated European politics for the past 12 years. Christian von Stetten, a lawmaker from Merkel's own Christian Democrats (CDU), said the allocation of cabinet posts, and the finance ministry in particular, had been "a political mistake".

Both camps had to make major sacrifices to secure a deal. The agreement promises an unusual half-time review after two years, when the parties will reassess the coalition - already being seen as a possible opportunity for Merkel finally

to step down.

"If it happens, the fourth Merkel cabinet will in some respects resemble the last cabinets of Helmut Kohl and Helmut Schmidt," wrote Kurt Kister, editor of the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper. "This government could be captioned 'Won't last long'."

Even that may prove optimistic if SPD leader Martin Schulz fails to persuade the party's 464,000 members to ratify the deal in a postal ballot, the results of which will be announced on March 4.

The centre-left party saw its previous four years in "grand coalition" with the conservatives rewarded with its worst poll result in decades in September's national election, and the slide has continued since. The SPD was on 18 percent in a GMS poll conducted before the deal was announced, the lowest reading GMS had ever registered, and only four points ahead of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD). Together, the two grand coalition parties, which have between them shaped Germany's postwar politics, barely scored 50 percent.

Two-year review pledge suggests govt on borrowed time



Convincing the SPD

Opponents of the deal say Schulz's team



BERLIN: (Left to right) Horst Seehofer, leader of the conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), German Chancellor Angela Merkel, leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), and Martin Schulz, leader of the social democratic SPD party, pose after giving a press conference in Berlin on Wednesday. — AFP

failed to put a left-wing stamp on the program, which continues to promise the budget discipline that has been the hallmark of Merkel's three governments. It is unclear if they will be persuaded by his response that the SPD will control top ministries including finance, foreign affairs and labor.

Schulz's defenders emphasize new com-

mitments on welfare spending, housing and pensions, and worker-friendly labor law reforms. Paradoxically, the political right's dismay could win over more reluctant SPD members. The mass-selling daily *Bild* said Merkel had sold out. "Chancellor at any price," *Bild* wrote on its front page. "Merkel gifts the SPD the government." — Reuters

Is it OK to insult the king? Dutch MPs to debate

THE HAGUE: Dutch MPs were yesterday to debate scrapping 19th-century laws making it a criminal offence to insult the king, with backers of a draft bill saying they no longer fit a "modern monarchy".

But the issue is a hot-button topic in the Netherlands where the royal family is much loved, and the down-to-earth King Willem-Alexander has proved as popular as his mother, former queen Beatrix, since he succeeded to the throne in 2013. The lowlands nation of 17 million people remains one of the few countries to still maintain "lese majeste" laws, under which it is a criminal offence to insult or defame the monarch.

But the draft bill put forward by the progressive D66 party—a member of the ruling coalition—is causing fissures in the fragile four-party

ruling alliance.

First deemed a crime in 1830, the law banning defamation of the head of the royal household has been on the Dutch statute books since 1886. But today it "implies restricting freedom of speech," argued D66 MP Kees Verhoeven in his draft bill, first put forward in early 2016.

"Since 1830, 185 years have gone by. That's a good reason to update changes to the legislation," he said. Yesterday's debate is likely to be heated, with two conservative Christian coalition parties already lining up to argue against the move, saying the king was not in a position to defend himself from any insults. The law is seldom invoked however, and carries a maximum of five years in jail or a penalty of nearly 20,000 euros (\$24,500). — AFP

Popular French minister denies sex harassment rumors

PARIS: France's environment minister Nicolas Hulot furiously fended off rumors of sexual harassment on Wednesday, two weeks after another member of President Emmanuel Macron's cabinet was accused of rape. Hulot, a celebrity green activist who is one of Macron's most popular ministers, appeared close to tears in a television interview as he denied the "shameful" rumors.

"It hurts, when it's wrongful and unfounded. Yesterday my children were in tears," said the 62-year-old, describing the situation as "a nightmare".

Questioned on BFMTV about accusations from "the grand-daughter of a famous politician" dating back to 1997, he acknowledged that the woman filed a complaint in 2008 but said the case was dismissed. "I was questioned at my own request and investigators very quickly concluded that there was nothing suggesting the case should be followed up," Hulot said.

Hulot was attempting to clear the air ahead of the publication of an investigation by a French magazine this week which has emerged as another cloud around the TV star who has faced a difficult start to his life as a politician.

He also denied suggestions that a former colleague had accused him of harassment.

"The answer is no," he said. "The worst thing is that

she has already been questioned by some of your colleagues and she gave the same answer." He said he had not yet considered resigning, but added: "My family comes first, that's what will guide my decision."

Nine vehicles

The rumors dogging Hulot emerged after Paris prosecutors reopened an investigation in late January into rape allegations against Budget Minister Gerald Darmanin. A former call girl claims he pressured her into sex in 2009 in exchange for helping her clear her name in a legal dispute. Darmanin's lawyers have accused her of a "crude attempt to harm" the minister's reputation and said he was suing her for slander. Other ministers have rallied around Darmanin and yesterday Prime Minister Edouard Philippe offered Hulot his support, saying there was "no reason to doubt his words".

France, like other countries around the world, has seen an outpouring of allegations of sexual assault and harassment in the wake of the scandal engulfing Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein.

Having campaigned for environmental protection for three decades, Hulot was among several figures Macron brought in from outside politics to brighten his cabinet when he was elected in May.

He has regularly been reported to be on the brink of resigning, frustrated over multiple issues including a decision to delay France's commitment to cutting its reliance on nuclear energy to 50 percent until after 2025.

After filing a declaration of his assets in December as required by ministers, press reports highlighted how the eco-warrior owned nine motor-engined vehicles, including an SUV. — AFP

International

US body brokers supply world with torsos, limbs and heads

MedCure sells or leases about 10,000 body parts from US donors annually

PORTLAND, Oregon: On July 20, a Hong Kong-flagged cargo ship departed Charleston, South Carolina carrying thousands of containers. One of them held a lucrative commodity: body parts from dozens of dead Americans.

According to the manifest, the shipment bound for Europe included about 6,000 pounds of human remains valued at \$67,204. To keep the merchandise from spoiling, the container's temperature was set to 5 degrees Fahrenheit. The body parts came from a Portland business called MedCure Inc. A so-called body broker, MedCure profits by dissecting the bodies of altruistic donors and sending the parts to medical training and research companies.

MedCure sells or leases about 10,000 body parts from US donors annually, shipping about 20 percent of them overseas, internal corporate and manifest records show. In addition to bulk cargo shipments to the Netherlands, where MedCure operates a distribution hub, the Oregon company has exported body parts to at least 22 other countries by plane or truck, the records show.

Among the parts: a pelvis and legs to a university in Malaysia; feet to medical device companies in Brazil and Turkey; and heads to hospitals in Slovenia and the United Arab Emirates. Demand for body parts from America — torsos, knees and heads is high in countries where religious traditions or laws prohibit the

dissection of the dead. Unlike many developed nations, the United States largely does not regulate the sale of donated body parts, allowing entrepreneurs such as MedCure to expand exports rapidly during the last decade.

No other nation has an industry that can provide as convenient and reliable a supply of body parts.

Since 2008, Reuters found, US body brokers have exported parts to at least 45 countries, including Italy, Israel, Mexico, China, Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. Whole bodies are studied at Caribbean-based medical schools. Plastic surgeons in Germany use heads from dead Americans to practice new techniques. Thousands of parts are shipped overseas annually; a precise number cannot be calculated because no agency tracks industry exports. Most donor consent forms, including those from MedCure, authorize brokers to dissect bodies and ship parts internationally. Even so, some relatives of the dead said they did not realize that the remains of a loved one might be dismembered and sent to the far reaches of the globe.

"There are people who wouldn't necessarily mind where the specimens were sent if

they were fully informed," said Brandi Schmitt, who directs the University of California system's anatomical donation program. "But clearly there are plenty of donors that do mind and that don't feel like they're getting enough information."

MedCure shipments are now the subject of a federal investigation. In November, the Federal Bureau of Investigation raided the company's Portland headquarters. Though the search warrant remains sealed, people familiar with the matter say it relates in part to overseas shipping.

MedCure is cooperating with the investigation, said its lawyer, Jeffrey Edelson. He declined to comment on the FBI raid, but said: "MedCure is committed to meeting and ex-

ceeding the highest standards in the industry. It takes very seriously its obligation to not only deliver safe specimens securely, but to do it in a way that respects the donors."

Edelson also said MedCure "partners with government and industry agencies to follow and exceed requirements for shipping human tissue," and that "shipping handlers, drivers and carriers are specially trained for the safe handling and transportation of human specimens."



Body brokers exported parts to 45 countries since 2008

requests were unfortunately refused," Rohde said on Twitter. "That is surely not the way forward." The diplomats, based in neighboring Sri Lanka but also accredited to the Maldives, arrived in Male after the regime said it was open to foreign observers visiting the country.

However, foreign media have effectively been barred after authorities imposed tough visa conditions and warned they would take up to three weeks to process applications.

The UN has urged Yameen to lift the state of emergency, and was due to discuss the crisis gripping the Indian Ocean archipelago in a closed-door meeting at the Security Council yesterday.

"The Maldives have seen in recent years attacks on political opponents, on journalists, on civil society and human right defenders, and what is happening now is tantamount to an all-out assault on democracy," UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said Wednesday. Western governments, as well as neighboring India and China have asked their citizens not to go on holiday to the Maldives, a nation of 1,192 tiny coral islands scattered 800-kilometres (550-miles) across the equator.

The crisis in the country of 340,000 Sunni Muslims came to a head a week ago when the Supreme court in a shock decision ordered Yameen to release all political dissidents after quashing their convictions. Yameen refused to comply and insisted that the court reverses its order.

Infected parts at the border

As a Reuters series last year revealed, the body donation industry is so lightly regulated in the United States that almost anyone can legally buy, sell or lease body parts. Although no federal law expressly regulates the body trade, there is one situation in which the US government does exercise oversight: when body parts leave or enter the country. Border agents have the authority to ensure that the parts are not infected with contagious diseases and are properly shipped.

This authority played a leading role in the government securing a conviction last month of Detroit broker Arthur Rathburn, who stored body parts in grisly, unsanitary conditions, according to trial testimony. The FBI began to focus intently on Rathburn's business, International Biological Inc, after repeated border stops in which he was found ferrying human heads, court records show.

The jury found that Rathburn defrauded customers by supplying body parts infected with HIV and hepatitis. "The fraud scheme orchestrated by IBI shocked even the most experienced of our investigative team," said FBI special-agent-in-charge David Gelios. Even in death, Gelios said in a statement after the verdict, donors were "victimized as IBI intentionally and recklessly marketed and transported contaminated human remains — Personal greed overcame decency." — Reuters

Maldives president shuns European diplomats

MALDIVES, Maldives: Maldives President Abdulla Yameen refused yesterday to meet senior European diplomats who were the first foreign dignitaries to visit the troubled nation since his crackdown on the islands' judiciary. Envoys from the European Union, Germany and Britain arrived in the capital after top judges and several other dissidents were arrested this week, as Yameen appeared to gain the upper hand in a bitter power struggle. The tiny island nation has been grappling with a political crisis after the president refused to obey a Supreme Court order to release nine political prisoners and declared a state of emergency. The German Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Jorn Rohde, said the trio requested meetings to discuss Yameen's crackdown on dissent which the UN human rights chief had dubbed "an all-out assault on democracy".

"Sadly the Maldivian government refuses dialogue today with my UK/EU colleagues... Our



MALE: A Maldives laborer carries watermelons at a local fruits and vegetables market in Maldives capital Male yesterday. The international community has censured Maldives President Abdulla Yameen for imposing special emergency provisions that allow the military to detain suspects for long periods without charge. — AFP

Eventually he declared a state of emergency, took away the powers of the judiciary and parliament to impeach him and arrested the Chief Justice and another judge. He also arrested former

president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, his estranged half-brother who was the last remaining opposition figure in the country. All other key opponents of Yameen are either in jail or in exile. — AFP

International

Top Trump aide resigns after battery allegations

Two ex-wives publicly accuse Porter of domestic abuse

WASHINGTON: White House staff secretary Rob Porter a near-constant fixture at President Donald Trump's side—has resigned from his post, after two ex-wives publicly accused him of domestic abuse. The White House said Porter denied the allegations and retains the confidence of Trump and his chief of staff John Kelly, but would be leaving his post at an undetermined time.

His resignation comes after reports in the Daily Mail and The Intercept, in which Porter's ex-wives Colbie Holderness and Jennifer Willoughby documented alleged physical and psychological abuse.

A pair of photos showed Holderness with a badly bruised eye, which she claimed was the result of being punched by Porter. The Intercept reported that the FBI became aware of the allegations when conducting background checks for Porter's security clearance.

Kelly in a statement said he was "shocked" by the allegations, saying "there is no place for domestic vio-

lence in our society." "I stand by my previous comments of the Rob Porter that I have come to know since becoming Chief of Staff, and believe every individual deserves the right to defend their reputation," he said.

"I accepted his resignation earlier today, and will ensure a swift and orderly transition."

Porter is not well known pub-



Kelly shocked by the 'allegations'

licly but is often seen on travels with the president outside Washington and in White House meetings. In recent weeks, he was closely involved in preparations for Trump's address to business leaders in Davos, Switzerland.

The Daily Mail had recently sug-

gested he was in a relationship with Trump's communications advisor Hope Hicks. "The President and chief of staff have had full confidence and trust in his abilities and his performance," Sanders said Wednesday. She then read a statement from Porter, in which he said "these outrageous allegations are simply false."

"I took the photos given to the media nearly 15 years ago, and the reality behind them is nowhere close to what is being described." "I've been transparent and truthful about these vile claims, but I will not further engage publicly with a coordinated smear campaign."

The White House denied suggestions that it ignored security concerns flagged by the FBI. "Consistent with the practice of past administrations, issues related to an individual's suitability are reviewed through a thorough and lengthy background check process," said Sanders.

"Background checks involve a complex investigation run by intelligence and law enforcement agencies." — AFP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, White House senior adviser Jared Kushner (left), White House chief of staff John Kelly (center) and White House staff secretary Rob Porter look on after US President Donald Trump signed a proclamation calling for a national day of prayer on September 3. —AFP

Canada to review deal to sell helicopters to Philippines

OTTAWA: Just one day after signing a \$233 million agreement to sell 16 helicopters to the Philippines, the Canadian government on Wednesday ordered a review of the deal amid concerns the aircraft could be used to fight rebels. Trade Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne said that the deal - formally signed on Tuesday - had been struck in 2012 on the understanding the helicopters would be used for search-and-rescue missions. Philippine Major-General Restituto Padilla, military chief of plans, told Reuters on Tuesday the helicopters would be used for the military's internal security operations, adding they could also be deployed in search-and-rescue and disaster relief operations.

"When we saw that declaration ... we immediately launched a review with the relevant authorities. And we will obviously review the facts and take the right decision," Champagne told reporters, without giving more details. The Bell 412EPI helicopters were due to be delivered early next year as the Philippine military prepares to step up operations against Islamist and communist rebels. Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana initially expressed bemusement at news of Canada reviewing the deal. He later issued a statement that the helicopters would primarily be used for the transporting and supplies, ferrying wounded soldiers and for humanitarian assistance and disaster response. — Reuters

'Tanks but no tanks!' say critics of Trump's parade

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's dream of a grand military parade through the streets of the US capital attracted scorn, skepticism and even a dash of wit from local officials on Wednesday.

Critics argued a parade could cost millions of dollars, at a time the Pentagon wants more stable funding for an overstretched military. "A military parade in DC would shut down the nation's capital and waste taxpayer dollars just to feed Trump's ego," said Eleanor Holmes Norton, a non-voting delegate to the US Congress for the District of Columbia, a Democratic stronghold.

US Senator Lindsey Graham, a prominent Republican voice on defense matters, said he favored highlighting the country's armed forces but not its weaponry. "I think a parade showcasing the military and the sacrifices they make for the country would be appropriate, it would be a way to say thank you, but I'm not interested in a military hardware display. That would be



PARIS: In this file photo taken on July 14, 2017, US President Donald Trump (center) salutes US troops, flanked by (from left) French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe, US First Lady Melania Trump, French President Emmanuel Macron and his wife Brigitte Macron during the annual Bastille Day military parade on the Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris. —AFP

cheesy and project weakness," Graham told reporters on Wednesday.

The White House said on Tuesday it had asked the Pentagon to explore a celebration of "America's great service members," after the Republican president marveled at the Bastille Day military parade he attended in Paris last year. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis - who argued to lawmakers on Tuesday that a budgetary impasse was eroding US advantages over

adversaries and could lead to aircraft being grounded - said the Pentagon was putting together options that would be sent to the White House. "I think we're all aware in this country of the president's affection and respect for the military," Mattis told reporters, while declining to address the costs of the parade. One option under consideration is for a parade on Nov. 11 - which would be the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One. — Reuters

International

Clashes as Bangladesh court jails Khaleda Zia for 5 years

Court finds former PM guilty of embezzling money

DHAKA: A Bangladesh judge convicted opposition leader Khaleda Zia of corruption and sentenced her to five years in jail yesterday as police clashed with thousands of her supporters outside the court.

The court found the two-time former premier guilty of embezzling money meant for an orphanage, a charge she had consistently dismissed as politically motivated. Zia, leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), is expected to appeal against the verdict, but it may affect her ability to stand in a general election slated for December.

"This is a false and staged case. No way we will accept this verdict," BNP secretary general Fakhru Islam Alamgir told AFP after the hearing. Zia's lawyer Khandkar Mahub Hossain said the ruling was "political vengeance" and would be overturned by a higher court.

Ahead of the hearing police fired tear gas at thousands of opposition activists who defied heavy security to escort the car taking Zia to the magistrates court.

The private television station Somoy said at least five police officers had been injured and two motorcycles torched during the clashes that

broke out several kilometers (miles) from the court premises. Authorities have for days been on high alert for protests in the tense city, where political demonstrations by Zia's center-right BNP and its Islamist allies in 2014 and 2015 left nearly 200 people dead.

Around 3,500 opposition activists and officials were arrested in a sweep by security forces ahead of the verdict according to BNP spokesman Rizvi Ahmed. A senior officer told AFP more than 5,000 police had been deployed in Dhaka.

'Arbitrary arrests'

Zia, 72, is a former ally turned arch-foe of Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Her party boycotted 2014 polls in which Hasina was re-elected but is expected to contest the upcoming general election. Zia, who entered politics in the mid-1980s after her military dictator husband was assassinated in an abortive coup, also faces dozens of separate charges related to violence and corruption. She has repeatedly said the charges against her are aimed at excluding her and her family from politics.

Her son Rahman lives in exile in London and was convicted of money-laundering in 2016.

Police clash with thousands of supporters



DHAKA: Bangladesh police charge towards activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party protesting following a verdict against opposition leader Khaleda Zia in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

Last month prosecutors sought the death penalty over his alleged role in a deadly 2004 grenade attack that injured Hasina. Zia and her son were detained by an army-backed government in 2007 and spent a year and a half in detention pending trials for alleged corruption.

"This is an attempt to use the court against me, in an effort to sideline me from politics and elec-

tions and to isolate me from the people," she told a packed news conference on Wednesday.

Human Rights Watch yesterday urged the government to stop what it called "arbitrary arrests and detentions". "The Bangladesh government's claims to be open and democratic ring hollow as it cracks down on political dissent," said the group's Asia director Brad Adams. — AFP

Tougher US strategy puts Afghan Taliban on the back foot

JALALABAD, Afghanistan: A more aggressive US strategy in Afghanistan has put the Taliban on the back foot, soldiers and police say, but bloody recent attacks in Kabul show the insurgency remains potent and a prolonged stalemate looms.

US President Donald Trump in August unveiled a more hawkish military approach, including a surge in air strikes, aimed at forcing the Taliban to the negotiating table. While Afghan security forces say the impact has been significant, the Taliban still roam huge swathes of the country and, with foreign troop levels at about 15,000 compared with 140,000 in 2014, there appears little hope of outright military victory.

"The American air strikes have broken their back," said Nasrullah a soldier in Kunar province on the Pakistani border. "They don't dare attack in large numbers because they know they'd all get killed.



WAKHAN, Afghanistan: An Afghan Wakhi family buying jewelry from a Pakistani trader in the Wakhan Corridor in northern Afghanistan. A more aggressive US strategy in Afghanistan has put the Taliban on the back foot, but bloody recent attacks in Kabul show the insurgency remains potent and a prolonged stalemate looms. — AFP

Without air support we'd be struggling."

The Taliban made gains after NATO withdrew most combat troops in late 2014. Two years later, they were threatening several district centers and even two provincial capitals including Kunduz, in the north, which was captured briefly.

Now the militants no longer threaten the city, said Kunduz police chief Abul Hameed Hamidi. Air strikes had been a "game changer", he said, along with a revived

campaign of "night raids" aimed at capturing militant leaders, which previous President Hamid Karzai banned because they were so unpopular.

Soldiers and police in districts outside Kunduz that were contested a year ago said the war had tilted in their favor. "They can't face us and instead hide among civilians, plant roadside bombs and carry out suicide attacks," said soldier Abdul Karim. — Reuter

Nepal Communist parties poised to take power

KATHMANDU: Nepal's Communist parties have secured a majority of seats in the upper house of parliament, the election commission said yesterday, paving the way for the leftist alliance to form the next government two months after historic general elections.

The alliance of the main Communist party and former Maoist rebels won a strong majority in the indirectly elected upper house, according to results announced yesterday. The results of the national vote held late last year have not yet been confirmed, but an incomplete tally suggests the alliance also secured a majority in the directly elected lower house.

Last year's landmark elections capped Nepal's rocky 11-year transition from monarchy to federal democracy after a brutal civil war between Maoist guerrillas and the state. The elections were the first under the country's new post-war constitution,

which sets out a sweeping overhaul of the political system, devolving significant power from the center to the seven provinces. The final results were delayed by disagreements over how the new election rules in the constitution should be implemented. — AFP

International

Thousands of Palestinians jam Gaza border, opened by Egypt

Cairo cites security concerns for keeping frontier closed

GAZA: Thousands of Palestinian travellers gathered at Gaza's border crossing with Egypt yesterday hoping for a brief chance to leave after Cairo temporarily opened a frontier it largely keeps closed as it battles an Islamist insurgency on the other side. Israel also maintains tight restrictions on its border with the Gaza Strip, meaning the 2 million Palestinians who live there are rarely able to leave the densely-populated enclave in which the Hamas Islamist movement is the dominant armed force.

In a wheelchair and helped by his wife and daughter, 74-year-old Awni An-Najar said at Rafah crossing that he sought to enter Egypt for treatment of his broken hip. "Patients must be allowed to travel freely. I want to be able to walk again," he said. Egypt tends to open the frontier temporarily a few times a year, usually with short notice and little explanation. The latest opening began on Wednesday with no advanced announcement at all.

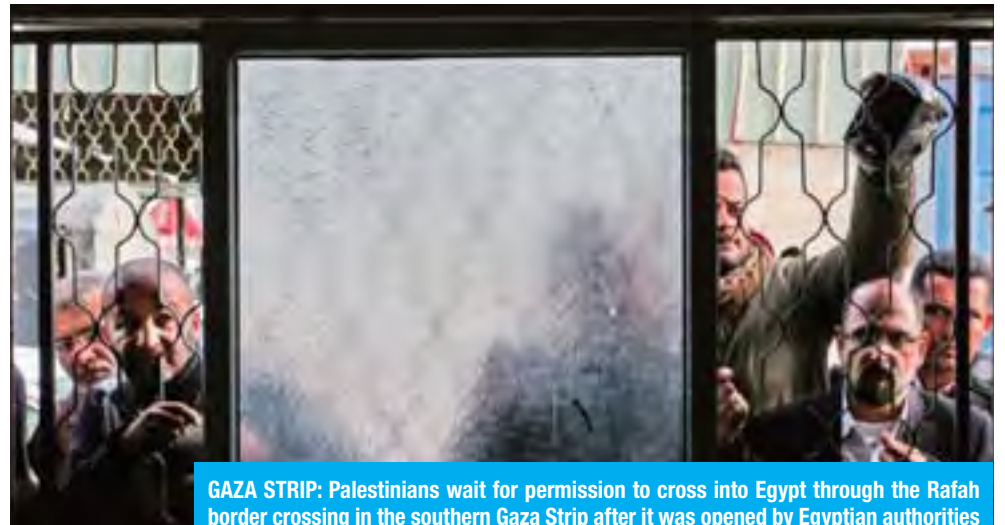
The Palestinian embassy in Cairo "extended gratitude to President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi for his care

to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people," it said in a statement. The Egyptian foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment. It was only the second time in more than a decade that the border was opened while unarmed security officers of the Western-backed Palestinian Authority (PA), rather than Hamas, guarded the Palestinian side. A reconciliation agreement in October between Hamas and the rival Fatah movement of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas gave the PA control of the Rafah crossing for the first time since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007.

Egypt opened the border briefly in December. Gazans have hoped PA control could be a step towards the permanent reopening of the frontier, ending a state of de facto blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt for security reasons, which has destroyed the territory's economy leaving Gaza with the world's highest unemployment rate according to the World Bank. So far, Egyptian authorities say a permanent opening of the border depends on se-



Israel maintains tight restrictions at Gaza border



GAZA STRIP: Palestinians wait for permission to cross into Egypt through the Rafah border crossing in the southern Gaza Strip after it was opened by Egyptian authorities for humanitarian cases on Wednesday. — AFP

curity on the Egyptian side, where they have been battling an increasingly violent Islamist insurgency.

Because of the lack of prior notice, only several dozen travellers arrived in time to cross on Wednesday. A far bigger crowd turned up yesterday. Rafah

will close again after nightfall on Friday. Egypt has accused Hamas in the past of aiding the Sinai insurgents, an allegation the movement denies. In recent months, Hamas has stepped up security along the border. — Reuters

NEWS IN BRIEF

Saudi Arabia executes 4 Pakistanis for murder, rape

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday executed four Pakistani men convicted of raping and murdering a woman and raping her teenage son, the interior ministry said. The men were also convicted of stealing jewelry and cash after entering the woman's home in Riyadh and raping and strangling her, according to a ministry statement cited by the official SPA news agency. Saudi Arabia has executed 20 people since the start of 2018, according to an AFP count. Last year, 141 people were put to death in the kingdom, where executions are carried out by the sword.

UN appeals for \$1bn for Boko Haram-hit NE Nigeria

ABUJA: The UN yesterday said more than \$1 billion in funding was needed this year to help millions of people affected by Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency in northeast Nigeria. The humanitarian coordinator in Nigeria, Edward Kallon, said "life-saving emergency assistance to the most vulnerable" in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states was the "immediate priority". Funding would also go towards improving the quality of programs already in place and increasing the ability of local agencies to respond in the longer term, he added.

Romanian ex-finance minister convicted

BUCHAREST: A former Romanian finance minister and current adviser to the government was sentenced to eight years in prison yesterday for taking some 1.4 million euros (\$1.7 million) in bribes. Darius Valcov was accused of helping a Romanian company win public tenders in exchange for backhanders when he was a local mayor in 2009-2013. — AFP

'We are in a war': Cameroon unrest confronted

YAOUNDE: Daniel was in his home in the village of Bole in Southwest Cameroon on Feb. 2 when he heard gunfire and a commotion. Moments later, his house was ablaze, flames licking the walls.

Despite the fire, Daniel dared not leave. Outside, dozens of Cameroonian soldiers charged with putting down a separatist insurgency had descended from trucks, opened fire on fleeing residents and set buildings alight, he said. Daniel's brother Ekoda, who was outside the house, said he saw seven dead bodies. Army spokesman Colonel Didier Badjeck said claims that houses were burned and people shot in Bole last week were "totally false", and he denied that soldiers were mistreating residents in other villages detailed in this story.

"We are sure that the soldiers are respecting human rights. If we don't do that we are very foolish," Badjeck told Reuters by telephone, adding that any misconduct by soldiers is dealt with strongly. "If you want success, you have to have the population on side."

A government spokesman did not respond to requests for comment. The Bole raid, corroborated by other witnesses, echoes near identical operations by the army in villages across Southwest Cameroon. The accounts shed new light on the fast deteriorating security situation in Anglophone Cameroon and on the tactics used by the military to quell a growing secessionist movement that has killed 22 soldiers and policemen in a campaign to split Cameroon's English-speaking

minority from Yaounde.

The fighting has become a threat to President Paul Biya's longstanding rule and to stability in the oil- and cocoa-producing Central African country where presidential elections are scheduled for October. There are about five million Anglophones in Cameroon, a nation of 24 million. Most of Cameroon's oil is found off the coast of the Anglophone region, according to the International Crisis Group. Interviews with a dozen residents and separatist leaders in the English-speaking Southwest and Northwest regions reveal another worrying trend for Biya: the crackdown is increasing support for a growing number of armed groups bent on secession. "They are fighting against us because they don't want us to separate from them, but we have already made up our minds," said Daniel, who spoke from his bed in a nearby hospital, medical gauze covering his left arm, his face charred. Daniel escaped the burning house when the soldiers left, but not before suffering severe burns. Daniel, like most residents quoted in this story, asked that his full name not be used for fear of reprisals.

Attacking wholesale

There have been secessionists ever since Anglophone Cameroon gained independence from Britain in 1961 and voted to join in a federation with neighboring Francophone Cameroon, which had won independence from France a year earlier. French-speaking politicians held sway in government and the

promise of equality for Anglophones faded. They were forced to drive on the right hand side of the road, adopt the metric system and take on the CFA franc currency.

In 1972 President Ahmadou Ahidjo declared an end to federalism, erasing regional autonomy completely. His successor, Paul Biya, centralized things further when he came to power in 1982. He removed the second star from the national flag which represented the Anglophone regions.

The separatist movement remained on the political fringe for decades until late 2016, when English-speaking lawyers and teachers protested peacefully against having to work in French. The government cracked down hard and civilians were killed in clashes with police. The crowds grew in response, and so did the violence. In October 2017, more than 20 were killed during marches, according to Amnesty international. The military fired live rounds on protesters from helicopter gunships. By mid-2017, many who had previously wanted just a return to federalism were calling for secession. At marches, protesters waved the blue and white flag of Ambazonia - the separatists' proposed new state. An armed group called the Ambazonian Defence Force began attacking government soldiers in Anglophone regions. "In 2016, people were calling for non-violence, and it was the same for most of 2017. But in 2018, people no longer see that rhetoric as holding water. They have to defend themselves," said Tapang Ivo Tanku, an Anglophone activist based in the United States. The formal secessionist leadership, known as the Government of Ambazonia, has distanced itself from attacks on soldiers. Its leader, Ayuk Tabe, was arrested last month in Nigeria and was deported to Yaounde. — Reuters



Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2018

www.kuwaittimes.net

A nominee for queen performs during the main stage of the Carnival of Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz de Tenerife on the Spanish Canary island of Tenerife on Wednesday.— AFP

Quincy Jones says Michael Jackson stole songs

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This picture shows Shanghai rapper Naggy singing in his studio in Shanghai. — AFP photos



This picture shows Shanghai rapper Naggy (left) singing in his studio while fellow rapper Mr Trouble, Hong Tianlin (right), is reflected in the studio window in Shanghai.



This picture shows Shanghai rapper Naggy posing for a picture outside his studio in Shanghai.

'GOTTA FIND A WAY': CHINESE RAP IN CRISIS AFTER CRACKDOWN

Chinese rap and hip hop seemed poised to break out after a wildly popular singing show brought mainstream legitimacy to a musical style that had struggled to find its voice in China.

But an abrupt official backlash against hip hop culture has tamed the swagger of artists who fear that Chinese rap's development, like a once-promising homegrown rock-and-roll movement, will be nipped in the bud by Communist politics. "I don't need to be such a superstar—it's very dangerous," Shanghai rapper Mr Trouble said of the sudden shift in climate. He is now back in the studio, watering down a new album to avoid blowback.

"You gotta be a smart person. Even though it's soft and weak, it's a hip-hop album. I put my attitude in it. If you are smart too, you can dig it out," said Mr Trouble — 28-year-old Hong Tianlin. The past year has given Chinese rappers a case of whiplash. China lacks the racial issues and "gangsta" street culture that made rap and hip hop social and cultural forces in America. But it slowly took root as artists infused beats with commentary on issues like China's growing economic inequalities, adding in ancient Chinese philosophical references, and often rapped in earthy local dialects. Then came the smash-hit "The Rap of China". Debuting last summer, the internet-based rapping contest became one of China's most-watched programs, thrusting rap onto the national stage and earning its stars fame and recording contracts.

More money, more girls

Chen Wei, the show's producer, told state media last July that Chinese hip hop was "on the threshold of becoming really big and mainstream". The benefits trickled down to the likes of Mr Trouble, a chain-smoking self-taught musician and record producer. "Even if we didn't like that show, it influenced us a lot. We earned more money, and more girls love us," he said, chuckling. But rap's brief spring seemed destined to end under President Xi

Jinping, whose government has tightened the screws on anything considered antithetical to the ruling Communist Party's values. In August, the artist "Fat Shady" raised eyebrows with a profane rap against foreigners.

“ The red dragon ain't no evil but a peaceful place ”

And last month, PG One, co-winner of "The Rap of China", came under fire over a 2015 track containing sexual and drug references, and a rumored fling with a married actress. Finally, in mid-January a leaked government directive banned air time for "artists with tattoos, hip hop music" and other content that "conflicts" with party morals. A second season of "The Rap of China" is now in doubt, and artists say music venues won't book rap acts. Li Dalong, chief operating officer of Mao Livehouse, which has eight venues across China, said hip hop artists now face "more careful screening" for "ideological mistakes" in their music. "The biggest difficulty facing rappers is that sponsors are fleeing. I don't even know if 'Rap of China' season two will be allowed," he told AFP.

Unlikely to 'shut up'

In the 1990s, Chinese rock was similarly poised for a breakthrough as rockers tapped into angst about rapid socio-economic change. But the government soon banned it from television and re-

stricted live performances, forcing it back underground. Some fear the same for hip hop, or worse—being co-opted by the party. Groups like CD Rev from the southwestern city of Chengdu sing patriotic rap, working with the Communist Youth League to release songs like "This is China". The track hits several Communist talking points like improving food safety and protecting China's sovereignty, with lyrics like "The red dragon ain't no evil but a peaceful place." It went viral on its release in 2016. Purists call it propaganda, but group member Pissy-Li Yijie says its about "positive energy."

"Rap and hip hop have to express our ideas. We are expressing our own ideas instead of pursuing edgy music," the 24-year-old said, adding that CD Rev also expects to lose some business under the crackdown. For edgier artists like Shanghai's Naggy, the future is unclear. "We've gotta find a way. But we don't want to have to 'find a way' to express ourselves. We just want to express ourselves," he said. Shyr Ee Tan, an ethnomusicologist at Royal Holloway University of London, said hip hoppers won't "simply shut up." "What could get interesting is how they react to the ban, creatively and socio-politically. Do they dig in deeper into their perceived non-mainstream positions?" she said. "I suspect quite a few artists will actually choose to work with the government... as rockers have done."

The ban encompasses China's broader "sang" subculture, a catch-all for youthful pessimism. But it also hurts Mr Trouble, whose raps touch on romance, his beloved parents, and his Shanghai childhood. Despite his bad-boy nickname, he says China's government "is doing well" at managing the huge country. But he's tempering his dreams. "We still got fans, and we still see hope. But even if hip hop is dead in China, I will still make rap songs. I will record them and sing to myself." —AFP



Quincy Jones

Quincy Jones says Michael Jackson stole songs

Quincy Jones, the legendary music producer behind Michael Jackson, says that the late King of Pop plagiarized some of his hits. "I hate to get into this publicly, but Michael stole a lot of stuff. He stole a lot of songs," Jones said in an interview full of eyebrow-raising comments published Tuesday by Vulture, the culture site of New York magazine. "The notes don't lie, man. He was as Machiavellian as they come," the 84-year-old music veteran said. He specifically cited "Billie Jean"—a signature song off the Jones-produced "Thriller," the top-selling album of all times.

Jones suggested similarities between the song and disco queen Donna Summer's "State of Independence," which was also produced by Jones and released several months earlier in 1982. Few listeners would immediately associate the two songs, although both open and are built on unusually lengthy synthesized bass lines. Jones also said Jackson was "greedy" and should have given

partial writing credit to keyboardist Greg Phillinganes for his song "Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough." Jones' allegations run against prevailing public perceptions of Jackson, who died in 2009 and is often viewed as a tortured soul with little financial acumen as he amassed wealth.

The producer voiced sympathy over Jackson's personal issues, saying he had raised concern to the singer over his plastic surgery and blamed abuse by the singer's father for the King of Pop's poor self-image. Jones has remained active as an octogenarian, recently launching the Qwest TV video streaming service for jazz, but has also made a stream of headline-grabbing comments with a generous sprinkling of profanity. In a recent interview with GQ magazine, he said he had 22 girlfriends around the world, spoke 26 languages and had undergone a cutting-edge treatment in Sweden to help him live to 110. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

All-star cast to cover
Bowie on US radio

Two years after David Bowie died, top names in music including Billy Corgan and Daryl Hall will cover his songs for a special edition of Howard Stern's radio show, the veteran host announced Tuesday. The 25-song show, to be co-hosted by Bowie's longtime producer Tony Visconti, amounts to a surprise forum for a tribute to the music legend who wanted no formal memorial. Stern made his name as a shock jock on New York radio in the 1980s but has gradually built a radio empire and mainstream respectability.

Stern, who will broadcast the retrospective today on his channel on satellite radio provider SiriusXM, said that Bowie was one of his first musical loves. "I want to make sure that people remember David Bowie," Stern, one of the most successful radio hosts in the United States, said in a statement. Corgan, the frontman and main force behind Smashing Pumpkins, will perform Bowie's breakthrough 1969 song "Space Oddity" while electronic rockers Garbage will cover another classic track, "Starman."

Bowie's contemporary Peter Frampton will sing "Rebel Rebel," while Daryl Hall—one half of chart-topping pop duo Hall and Oates—will take on "Fame," an emblematic song of the ever-transforming Bowie's 1970s funk phase. Other artists on the show will include pop star Lisa Loeb, retro pop act Bleachers, folk rockers Dawes and prominent indie rockers Car Seat Headrest and Spoon's Britt Daniel. Bowie stunned fans when he died in January 2016 from an undisclosed battle with cancer at age 69. While his family did not authorize any memorial, previously planned charity concerts several months later in Bowie's adopted home of New York turned into tributes, drawing prominent artists including Blondie, the Pixies, The Flaming Lips and Michael Stipe of R.E.M. fame. Forbes magazine has ranked Stern as the world's seventh highest-paid celebrity on its last annual list with earnings of \$90 million over the previous year. — AFP

Rocker Josh
Homme finds
fresh voice with
'In the Fade'

Rocker Josh Homme

Best known for his rugged guitar rock with Queens of the Stone Age, Josh Homme unexpectedly found a new creative freedom when he composed the score for the thriller "In the Fade." The German movie about neo-Nazi violence, which won the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film, is named after a 2000 song by Queens of the Stone Age. Director Fatih Akin is a fan of the California rockers and approached Homme to tell him that he had been listening to the band as he wrote the script. Homme, who at the time was mixing the band's last album "Villains," was surprised by the proposal but agreed—and wound up delighted with the chance to release more experimental music.

The rocker said he had pulled out of projects in the past when too many people got involved. But on "In the Fade," he realized that Akin was giving him full control, even telling him, "I am not worried about the music. I know it is going to be great." "I was very relieved," Homme told AFP. "I felt that it was a movie made passionately and under the control of Fatih."

Diane Kruger, who won the best actress award at Cannes for the movie, had made the original suggestion that Akin contact Homme. Kruger in the film plays a native German who seeks answers about the killings of her Turkish-born husband and son. "I was so pleased it wasn't an American-style blockbuster movie because in America everything ends on everyone living

happily ever after. It took a very honest look at one woman's pain, and also Diane Kruger was so good," Homme said. "I am not sure if Fatih realized how contemporary this could be. It is almost a shame that the subject is so contemporary."

Son's heartbeats become music

Homme was obliged to write the score in less than a week. He maintains a hectic schedule and frequently works as a producer and collaborator, notably for punk legend Iggy Pop. Homme is also a member of Eagles of Death Metal, although he was not present when the group's concert was attacked in the bloody 2015 siege of Paris. Working out of the celebrated Rancho de la Luna studio in the California desert, Homme spoke remotely with Akin and felt he had a green light to pursue fresh directions.

"You know, people believe, 'Well, you play rock 'n' roll—that's all you can do.' I've heard this before, you know. This was a chance because Fatih said you can create whatever you think is right," Homme said. Homme decided to use "instruments that are not really instruments." Among them is a 50-gallon (200-litre) oil drum outside the studio and heartbeats from his son's sonogram—which dramatized the journey of Kruger's character Katja. — AFP



In this file photo a woman places flowers outside of David Bowie's SoHo apartment building on the first anniversary of his death in New York City. — AFP

Lana Del Rey 'super happy' but jittery after stalker arrested

Singer Lana Del Rey broke down in tears at a concert and acknowledged feeling jitters after police arrested a stalker who allegedly wanted to kidnap her. The 32-year-old artist, known for her melancholic baroque pop and tales of ill-fated love, said she was feeling "a little more emotional than I thought" as she opened a concert Monday night in Atlanta. "I was feeling totally fine and then I just got a little bit nervous right when I got on stage," Del Rey said as she wiped her cheeks with her hands and paced the stage, the crowd hollering its support.

"I just want to say that I'm super happy to be with you guys and if I'm a little bit feathery, just bear with me." She was referring to an incident shortly before her previous concert Friday in Orlando where police said they arrested 43-year-old Michael Hunt after being tipped off to threatening social media posts. Hunt was arrested a block away from the concert venue with a knife and a ticket to the concert, police said. He was being held

without bond on charges of attempted kidnapping with a weapon and aggravated stalking with a credible threat, court documents showed. He did not immediately enter a plea.

Hunt's Facebook page, which remained up Tuesday, showed a round-the-clock obsession with Del Rey interspersed with apocalyptic warnings about the world as well as more obscure bugbears, such as outrage over a group of naked bicyclists. Hunt, who lives some 135 kilometers (85 miles) away in the western Florida city of Riverview, posted Del Rey's "I Still Love Him" and appeared to portray himself as the song's subject. "I love you so much Lana(.) I can't wait to be back in your arms in a few days," he posted, declaring that everyone at the concert "will know who I am when I get there." — AFP



In this file photo Lana Del Rey arrives for the 60th Grammy Awards in New York. — AFP



Traders from Pakistan's northern Hunza valley travelling with yaks on a snow covered mountain near the Pakistani border in the Wakhan Corridor in northern Afghanistan. — AFP photos



Traders from Pakistan's northern Hunza valley loading their luggage on yaks brought from the Wakhan Corridor in northern Afghanistan.

Ancient Silk Road barter trade continues across High Asia's peaks



This picture shows traders from Pakistan's northern Hunza valley preparing tea while travelling to the Wakhan Corridor in northern Afghanistan.

People on both sides of the border share the same culture, language and kinship



This picture shows traders from Pakistan's northern Hunza valley loading their luggage on yaks brought from the Wakhan Corridor in northern Afghanistan.

Trader Afzal Baig tugs at his horse, frustrated by its stubborn refusal to take another step along a treacherous, snow-covered mountain pass that is peppered with the skeletons of those who have already failed the journey. The Irshad Pass, a narrow trail more than 16,300 feet above sea level, is part of the ancient Silk Road network, used for centuries by traders from northern Pakistan's Hunza valley to cross the Karakoram mountains into Afghanistan's windswept, barren Wakhan Corridor. One wrong step through the ragged mountains can end in a fall of thousands of feet, and as Baig's horse refuses to budge a blizzard is growing.

"Don't trust this route," Baig tells an AFP reporter accompanying his group. "It can betray you anytime." They are riding to meet the Wakhi tribe, inhabitants of the remote corner of Afghanistan, who will barter yaks and cattle in exchange for the traders' wares. It is a treacherous journey made by only a handful of people each year through the "Pamir Knot", where three of the highest mountain ranges in the world converge.

Baig knocks snow from the horse's shoe, and the party resumes their careful journey. The storm has reduced visibility to just a few feet forcing each man to follow the sound of the horse in front of him. Human skulls and other bones are scattered in caves along the route, skeletons that Baig says are the remains of other traders. He has already lost six of his travel partners, buried in avalanches along the trail. Three of them were killed in one accident, their bodies not found for nearly a year.

Yaks for hats

Baig's customers in Wakhan have no money, but neither does he. The basic currency unit is livestock. Three warm hats equals one sheep, half a dozen plastic watches equal two sheep or a goat, and 10 kilograms of tea or five kilograms of flour equal one yak. A secondary currency is yak butter, stored in the stitched stomach lining of a dead goat or a sheep. Highly prized, one such package can be traded for ten packets of cigarettes, or three pairs of shoes, or six to eight pairs of socks. "I hope to get three yaks," Baig says after the group make camp later that night. Trade with the people of the Wakhan Corridor is his "ancestral legacy", he explains. His elder brother and his father both walked these trails before him until old age finally brought their trading to a halt.

The residents of Hunza, once a princely state that now forms part of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, say barter trade with Wakhan is a centuries-old tradition that has helped cement peace between them. Aziz Ali Dad, a social anthropologist who has studied the tribes of the mountainous region known as High Asia, describes the present-day barter trade as a small artery of the Silk Road. "In the old days, the tribes on the border of China, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan used to trade with each other," Dad tells AFP.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ended most such interactions. But the route between Wakhan and Hunza survived, he says, largely because trails such as the Irshad Pass are one of the few ways in and it is mainly those with a historic connection that dare to travel them. "The people on both sides of the border share the same culture, the same language and kinship, which is an added advantage," Dad explains.



This picture shows a trader from Pakistan's northern Hunza valley removing snow from the hoof of his horse while travelling in the Wakhan Corridor in northern Afghanistan.

Land time forgot

As Baig reaches the first settlement in Wakhan, men and women rush to him. The men hug him and take the reins of his horse while the women kiss his hands, a traditional greeting of the Wakhi tribe. "Did you bring me the buttons that I asked you for last year," one woman asks eagerly as she serves him tea. The women of the Wakhan Corridor have a strange relationship with time: many of them do not know how old they are, but plastic watches brought by the traders are their most cherished ornaments.

Brightly coloured objects—from plastic buttons and bottles to nail clippers—can all be sewn onto women's clothes as decoration. One woman already wearing four plastic watches on one arm asks Baig if he has any more. "I need some for the other arm, may be three or four," she says. The woman's family trade a yak, a packet of butter and four sheep for buttons, watches, six pairs of socks and some woolen hats. Two other yaks are given on credit. A male member of the family will travel to Hunza this year and return with flour and rice. He explains: "This is based on trust (that) has existed as long as the trade itself." — AFP



Photos show "The Dubai Frame", a new landmark opened recently in Zabeel Park. — Photo Feature by Sulaiman Redha

DUBAI FRAME ... A MEGA STRUCTURE IN HEART OF DUBAI

The Dubai Frame, a new landmark opened recently in Zabeel Park, is considered as one of the World's best new attraction with its Golden 150m-high frame which shows the old and the new modern Dubai. Visitors can take a tour in the emirate's history exhibition before taking an elevator to a 93-metre long viewing

gallery at the top of the frame. At the top of the frame, visitors can enjoy looking down through a glass-floored walkway and see the old city of Deira to the north and the breathtaking towers of Sheikh Zayed Road to the south. — KUNA

'Monster fatberg' goes on public display in London

History enthusiasts with strong stomachs can now come face-to-face with part of the 130-tonne "monster fatberg" found last year clogging a Victorian-era sewer, in a new London exhibit. The rock-solid mass of food fat and sanitary wipes was found in drains under a major road in Whitechapel, east London, in September, and part of it is to go on show at the nearby Museum of London from today. "The fatberg tells a story about how modern London is changing," explained Sharon Robinson-Calver, the museum's head of Conservation and Collection Care.

"The museum's collection already contains objects from when London's Victorian sewer system was built. "Now, our sewers are threatened by a modern crisis. Eight times every hour a Thames Water customer suffers a blockage caused by items being flushed away or put down the drain which shouldn't be." A booming population and oilier diets have made the blockages

a persistent problem in recent years, but the 250-metre-long beast shocked even hardened fatberg hunters. "It's a total monster and taking a lot of manpower and machinery to remove as it's set hard," Matt Rimmer, Thames Water's head of waste, said at the time.

"It's basically like trying to break up concrete." The festering exhibit presented a unique set of challenges for museum staff. "The fatberg in its current state is an extremely hazardous material, teeming with bacteria and releasing small amounts of toxic gases," said Robinson-Calver. "The sample of fatberg we've taken might contain hypodermic needles, condoms, or sanitary materials, and are certainly capable of spreading disease. "Making it safe to display is an incredible challenge to be given". — AFP



A museum employee poses behind a piece of fatberg, a congealed lump of fat, sanitary napkins, wet wipes, condoms, diapers and similar items found in sewer systems, on display at the Museum of London, in central London. — AFP



Models display the fashion of Chen Peng during New York Fashion Week in New York on February 7, 2017. — AFP photos

CHINA STEPS INTO NEW YORK FASHION WEEK BREACH



Chen Peng is only 26 years old and yet his wildly original puffer coats have already adorned the likes of Rihanna and Lady Gaga. He's showing his latest collection in New York in a bid to conquer the world. "Everywhere," he tells AFP backstage at his fashion show when asked where he would like people to buy his clothes in the future. "You can buy it everywhere—that is my dream." Trained in London and inspired by Alexander McQueen, Chen set up his eponymous label in 2015 and is one of four Chinese labels brought to New York Fashion Week by Tmall, a platform of e-commerce giant Alibaba believed to command more than half of business-to-consumer transactions in China.

If New York's bi-annual style fest is plagued by US talent fleeing to Europe, a calendar on the rocks and the catwalk under threat, then Chinese designers are only too happy to step into the breach and max out their share of the North American market. On Wednesday, Tmall sponsored the first "China Day" at New York Fashion Week in a bid to introduce Chinese designers to US buyers, editors and influencers. It is the fruit of a five-year strategic partnership between the Council of Fashion Designers of America and the Sunchi management company, giving CFDA members access to the Chinese market and Chinese brands to the United States.

Chen won rave applause on Wednesday in Chelsea for his catwalk collection of giant puffer coats, puffer-style flower hats and ornamental handbags in the shape of a dog, colored bubblegum pink, blue and yellow. The Chinese New Year, next week, will usher in the Year of the Dog. The one-size-fits-all coats are

so enormous they're almost free standing, engulfing elfin models. If they looked like fat suits they were so instantly fun, glamorous and chic to be met by immediate oohs and aahs from the crowd. Chen called his collection "It's You" and said it was inspired by a petite client in New York who told him how warm, confident, unique and practical she felt while out walking her dog dressed in the largest possible size of one of his coats. Among the other labels were Peacebird, a youth label with annual sales of \$1.6 billion and 4,500 retail stores in China, whose show was a throwback to the 1980s, all tracksuit bottoms, school uniforms, dungarees, and a collaboration with Coca-Cola.





'Expect more'

Another was sportswear label Li-Ning, set up by China's gold medal-winning Olympic gymnast by the same name in 1990, which showcased a collection inspired by the Olympics, featuring street and sportswear for any client in any country given a distinctive Chinese twist. Tmall, part of the Alibaba Group that has 580 million active users — 80 percent of them under 30 years old—is heavily invested in see-now, buy-now fashion and streamed the shows live to their customer base, with many of the clothes instantly buyable.

It was not remotely put off by the likes of Tommy Hilfiger decamping to Milan for the fall/winter 2018 season, Proenza Schouler staying away in Paris, or Rihanna and Kanye West sitting this catwalk season out. "New York is the fashion capital of the world and it is the perfect place for us to forecast local brands and to get international exposure," Jessica Liu, president of Tmall Fashion and Luxury, told AFP, calling the US financial capital "very open minded."

Tmall offers what she calls a new retail experience, allowing consumers to purchase products, communicate with brands di-

rectly and see the show live online. While Chinese designers have long shown in New York, there has been a growing uptick in recent years and this China Day is unlikely to be the last. "Expect a lot more," said CFDA President and CEO Steven Kolb when asked if New York Fashion Week can expect more. "We have a lot of ideas and we a lot of work to do." But Chinese labels are at pains to stress that the strategic partnership isn't just about US brands tapping into the huge money-making potential of China.

They expressed a desire to shake the West out of any complacency with regard to putting Chinese fashion in a box and a determination to show off their own creativity. "We want to use our Chinese lens to interpret our culture," said Feng Ye, general manager of Li-Ning's e-commerce department. "We have a deeper understanding of our own culture and we can showcase how we are bridging the gap between East and West." — AFP



Models walk the runway at BOSS Menswear February 2018 - New York Fashion Week Mens' on February 7, 2018 in New York City.



Homemade jam that uses berries to sweeten, instead of sugar

By Melissa D'Arabian

My grandmother used to make jam every year out of the summer bounty of berries. It was a multi-day project involving scorching-hot vats of berries, thickened by pectin and pounds of white sugar, which she balanced with the tang of lemon or lime juice. A simple slab of toasted country bread slathered with her homemade jam and some salted butter was my favorite way to start the day.

Now, in a world that favors high-protein egg whites for breakfast, or if there is a piece of toast to be had, it's covered in smashed avocado and tomato slices instead of rich red jam, I wondered if it was even worth the hassle to create a healthier version of my Grandma's recipe. Turns out, it

was. The resulting recipe is so easy, a hefty jar of jam can be whipped up in minutes, keeping my fridge stocked for weeks. As a mom of four daughters, I jump on any opportunity to remove processed sugar from our treats, and this jam stayed delectably sweet and comforting in the process.

We use this jam to top toast like Grandma did, but we also use it instead of syrup on almond flour waffles, or to sweeten plain Greek yogurt for snacks, breakfast or dessert.

The challenge in removing the traditional white sugar is achieving the gel-like texture that makes jam, well, jammy. The secret is in using blueberries and apples, which both contain natural pectin, and boiling at very high heat, stirring constantly for the few minutes it takes to get the

jam to thicken. To mimic some of the sweetness of sugar, I add a few finely chopped dates, but you could actually skip them if you don't mind a little less sweetness. With the sugar and canning process gone, the jam must be eaten within a few weeks and kept in the fridge, but given how tasty the jam is and how easy it is to make a new batch - I even use readily-available frozen mixed berries! - this doesn't seem to be a problem.

No-fuss no-sugar-added berry jam

Ingredients:

3 dates, finely chopped
1/2 cup water
1 small tart cooking apple, like granny smith, peeled and finely chopped (1/4-inch cube)
3 cups frozen mixed berries (no need to thaw)

2 teaspoons lime zest
1 tablespoon lime juice
1/8 teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Preparation:

Place the chopped dates and water into a medium sauce pan and simmer for a minute or two to soften the dates. Add the chopped apple and frozen berries, and increase heat to medium high, and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Once the mixture is boiling, turn up the heat to high, and let boil vigorously, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens and turns jammy, about 3-4 minutes. (Carefully add a tablespoon of water if mixture starts to get dry.) Once the jam feels like it's thickening, turn off the heat and stir in lime zest, lime juice and vanilla extract if using. Cool before serving.

Sauteed **Duck Breasts** are elegant entree for Valentine's Day



By Sara Moulton

With Valentine's Day looming, here's an elegant entree that any basic cook can execute with ease. I'm talking about duck breasts with a five-ingredient sauce, the making of which requires all of 15 minutes of hands-on time.

But first, let's address a few common misconceptions about duck. Pekin duck - the kind of duck called for in this recipe and the one most readily available at stores and online - is not gamy. It's also not fattening, especially if you remove the skin. (I'll confess that I love the skin. It's where all of the crispiness lives.)

Finally, though, there are at least three other reasons to roll with a duck breast on this special occasion, none of which has anything to do with health: it's scrumptious, it cooks as quickly as a steak or a pork chop, and it's a great landing pad for any of the sauces you would put on either of

those meats. The sauce in this recipe for Sauteed Duck Breasts is a classic of French cuisine: shallots, wine, cream, mustard and peppercorns. The cream doubles as a thickener because that's the superpower it develops when it's reduced. Don't have green peppercorns at hand? Use crushed black peppercorns. Or, if you'd prefer to lose the sauce's peppery bite, leave out the peppercorns entirely.

Two tips about cooking duck breast: First, let it cook for the majority of the necessary time with the skin side down so that the skin becomes crispy and the fat is rendered out. Leave the hot fat in the pan as it accumulates; it helps to melt even more fat from the skin.

Secondly, be sure to let the duck breast rest after it's been cooked. As with any other animal protein, cooking the breast chases its juices to its outside layers. As the breast rests, the juices are reabsorbed, which prevents the duck from drying out when sliced.

SAUTEED DUCK BREASTS

Ingredients:

2 Pekin duck breast halves (about 8 ounces each)
Kosher salt
2 tablespoons minced shallots
1/3 cup dry white wine
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon drained green peppercorns in brine

Preparation:

Using a very sharp knife, lightly score the skin on each duck breast half in a crisscross pattern, all the way down but not through the meat. Pat the duck dry. Sprinkle the skin side lightly with the salt and in a large, cold skillet, place the duck, skin side down. Turn the heat to medium and cook until the fat starts to render out into the pan. Reduce the heat to medium-low and con-

tinue cooking the duck breasts until the skin looks very crispy, about 8 minutes. Do not pour off the fat: the liquid fat in the pan helps to render out the fat in the skin.

When the duck skin is crisp, transfer the breasts to a plate. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of the fat from the pan (reserve it for another use, such as sauteeing vegetables). Return the duck to the skillet, skin side up, and cook for another 3 to 5 minutes for medium-rare. Transfer the duck to a clean plate, skin side up. Cover it loosely with foil and let it rest for 10 minutes before slicing. Add the shallots to the pan and cook them over medium heat, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the wine to the skillet, increase the heat to high and simmer until the wine is reduced to about 2 tablespoons. Add the cream, bring it to a boil and simmer until it is reduced by one-third and thickened, about 3 minutes. Whisk in the mustard, peppercorns, duck juices from the plate the duck is resting on and salt to taste.

Mix Tape

CONQUERING THE ABYSS: A REVIEW OF 'SUBNAUTICA'



By Aakash Bakaya

Subnautica is a game that elicits a wheel-barrow worth of emotions every game session. One moment you're as calm as can be and then a sudden strange noise behind will have you whirling your character in the direction of the sound. In dark alien caves everything makes an odd sound and as the sole human survivor of your crash - you're completely alone to face it. You go deeper into the cave, allured by the red glow of rubies shining out of the darkness but the oxygen tank is depleting and you still haven't found what is making that strange clicking sound. How far do you go down? What if there are more than just rubies down beyond that turn? It's a decision that could end with a massive reward or a stinging failure and Subnautica only asks one thing of the player - survive and conquer your fears.

I was never interested in the recent 'Survival' genre of games that have populated Steam for the past few years. My only real experience in the genre is 'Minecraft' and even there I doubt I clocked in anything more than a couple of hours of game time. But with 'Subnautica' what really raised my interest was the traditional sci-fi setting. You're not stranded in an earth-like environment like in 'The Forest' or 'The Long Dark'. Here what lies around is alien in every sense of the word and you're the only (but not first) human on this planet. It's as sci-fi as you can get and it puts you squarely in the shoes of the protagonist.

Welcome to Planet 4546B

It begins with you plummeting in an emergency life-pod as the massive spaceship you were just on crashes. You're

knocked out in the process and when you come-to and climb out of your pod, you find yourself floating in the middle of an ocean as the massive carrier you were on lies burning and destroyed a few kilometers in front of you. It's a stellar opening to the story and it allows you to experience and dive into it at whatever pace you want.

There are no tutorials nor are there any instructions. You jump out of the pod, dive into the water and try to keep your food, water and oxygen bar from reaching zero. You're only tools at the start is your suits AI, a PDA with blueprints to the essential equipment you'll need to stay alive along with the life-pod's fabricator IE a futuristic device that can make things. None of these things helped satisfy my growing hunger and thirst. I got out and swam and was surprised to so easily grab hold of a fish. I took it back and my pod's fabricator which allowed me to cook it.

Ok my hunger was sated (for now) but what about water? On the brink of dying of thirst, I desperately gathered around the ingredients for distilled water and my life-signs finally stabilized. The AI congratulated me on staying alive but just as I started to settle the life-pod's radio starts beeping. It's a signal from another life-pod stranded near-by. They need help and are unable to leave because of near-by predators. Their co-ordinates are sent to my PDA and a distant symbol appears on the HUD marking their location. By this time, night has descended and the water is dark and foreboding. My crew can wait; besides who knows when they actually sent their distress call...they might either be safe or just dead.

That first distress call is the beginning of your journey on Planet 4546B. Your paltry tools grow vast and allow for a

tremendous amount of utility - exactly what you expect from a setting so far into the future. Not only are there signals from other life-pods, the mystery of what caused your space freighter 'The Aurora' to destructively crash is also left to be solved. Through lost PDAs and databoxes, you get small snippets of the Aurora's primary mission and its deceased crew members. You can also eventually brave through the surrounding radiation leaking from the ship and with the right tools explore the crumbling interiors. The inside of the ship is surprisingly secure but getting there is anything but safe.

Let me be just frank here - Subnautica is the most terrifying game I've ever played. Even the best horror games eventually lose their ability to frighten you around the half-way mark - but exploring the murky depths of Planet 4546B's ocean at night remains inherently nerve racking even after several hours. It's a primal fear, the one in which your brain naturally kicks in to two basic instincts - 'run away' and 'don't die'. Screenshots or videos of the game might not seem so frightening at first but the first time you hear the roar of Reaper Leviathan hunting you somewhere in the darkness and you see a shadow of its enormous size - you'll be asking for a new pair of pants once it's done with you.

Fear is the mind-killer

There are a number of creatures that will want to hunt you for lunch or because you went into their territory. As you scan and gather information, your PDA's data becomes one of your most useful tools as it helps you learn about the surrounding biomes and the wildlife that inhabit it. Learning through explo-

Mix Tape



ration, pillaging for resources and fighting the elements for survival - these will be your tenants of progress through the game.

It works so well because the game takes its time to immerse you into the world and knows when to let up and when to prod the player in the right direction. Eventually you'll find a suitable place to build a multi-functioning base, the Prawn Suit and the mighty Cyclops explorer. The meager scraps you struggled to live on can grow to striving in-door farms that sustain your food and water needs on a regular basis. Your progress will lead you deeper and deeper into the ocean and what you find will either petrify you or spurn you onwards.

Subnautica is unfortunately far from a flawless game, even though it gets extremely close to attaining that status. Even after

a three year long Early-Access period on Steam, bugs and performance issues still hinder the experience at times. The draw distance is atrocious and needs mods to fix, the numerous pop-in textures have wrecks instantly appearing out of nowhere in front of you (and in a game where exploration is key that's especially bad) and items pass through solid objects and are lost forever. Once when exploring inside the Aurora, I phased through the floor and was stuck in the walls. Unable to escape, I was forced to quit losing at least 45 minutes in the process. Even with these technical issues, the art direction and world-building shines through unhindered. The luminous glow of corals sparking in dark waters and the gorgeous planet size moon circling above in the night sky are sights to behold no matter how

many hours you've already played.

As of writing this review, I still haven't finished the game - I don't even know where exactly the finish line is. I know what my end goal is but even over 24 hours of play - I'm unsure how I'll get to it. There are still a number of biomes left to explore and a few I simply have to breathe-in, pull up my sleeves and just brave. I'm not sure what secrets those terrifying waters hold but what I do know is this - I'll be a slightly more courageous individual after. Few games allow you to conquer your fears so effortlessly like 'Subnautica' does and what is fear but something we simply must overcome. Fear is the mind-killer and when it is gone there will be nothing. Only I will remain.



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

Sudoku

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

Solution



Did You Know

Flamingos can actually fly better than most people realize. It is a very common misconception that flamingos do not fly, but they have the ability to fly hundred miles a day between different locations for the sake of finding food. They also take off very quickly and fly up to 35 miles per hour.

The notable pinkish color of the flamingo is due to the bird's diet. The algae flamingos eat consist of alpha and beta carotenoid pigments. Flamingos are actually born with a white or grayish tone, which changes over time due to this diet rich in carotenoids.

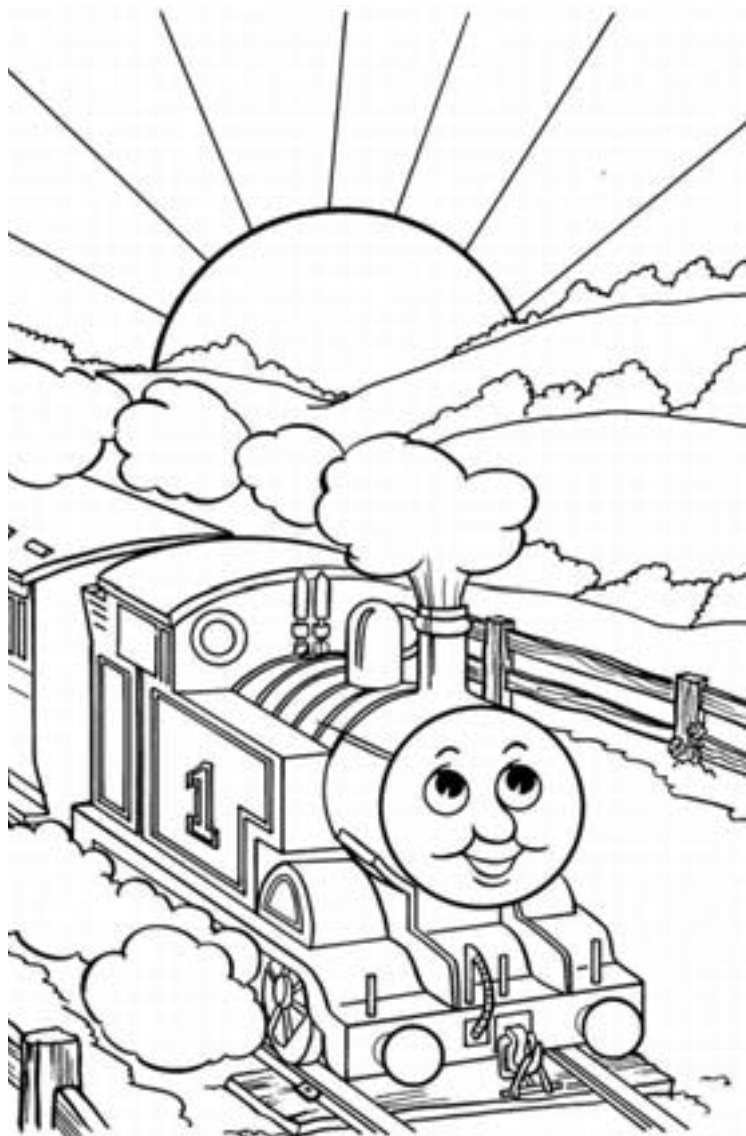
Flamingos shed and replace their body and wing feathers at very irregular intervals. This could happen twice a year or once every two years, depending on the particular bird's breeding cycle.

The flamingo's ankle is located halfway up the leg.

When the flamingo is born they have greyish eyes. This does not change until they become adults, and then they have yellow eyes.

The largest colony of flamingos contains 1 million members and can be found in East Africa.

Color Me



Raised Salt Painting

MATERIALS

- Card stock
- Squeeze bottle of glue
- Table salt
- Liquid watercolors
- Paint brushes or Droppers

INSTRUCTIONS

- Squeeze glue designs or pictures onto your card stock.

- Sprinkle with salt until the glue is thoroughly covered. Tip to let excess salt fall away.
- Dip your paint brush into liquid watercolor paint then gently touch to the salt-covered glue lines. Watch the paint "magically" travel in both directions!
- Let dry thoroughly. This may take a day or two.

Comic

WORD SEARCH

Movie Actresses 2

Find and circle all of the Movie Actresses that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Lausa Fletcher won an Oscar.

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

- | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| BATES, Kelly | JOHANSSON, Scarlett | SPACE, Sissy |
| BROOKE, Jamie | KIDMAN, Nicole | STENBERGEN, Mary |
| BRESLIN, Angel | KNIGHTLEY, Keira | STEWART, Kristen |
| BULLOCK, Sandra | LEWIS, Laura | STREEP, Meryl |
| BURTON, Elin | LOHAS, Lindsay | SWINTON, Tilda |
| CLARKSON, Patrick | MACLAINE, Shirley | THURMAN, Uma |
| CRUZ, Penelope | MACADAMS, Rachel | THOMAS, Liza |
| DELUPI, Julia | MOORE, Julianne | WALTERS, Juli |
| DESCHANEL, Zoey | REDFERNS, Michelle | WATTS, Naomi |
| DUNST, Kristen | PORTMAN, Keaton | WEAVER, Sigourney |
| FARRAR, Vera | REID, Toni | WEISS, Rachel |
| FLETCHER, Lausa | ROBERTS, Julia | WINGLET, Keri |
| HARRIS, Geena | ROOK, Wynne | WITHERSPOON, Nicole |
| HEIDT, Katherine | SAMANIGA, Susan | ZELLWEGER, Renee |
| HUDSON, Kate | SMITH, Maggie | |

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actresses 1

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

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| ADAMS, Amy | CUTHBERT, Felicia | LANE, Diane |
| ALBA, Jessica | DAVIS, Hope | LONGE, Jessica |
| ALLEN, Joan | DEVICH, Jud | MCDORMAND, Frances |
| BARVMOORE, Drew | DIJAZ, Cameron | MIRREN, Helen |
| BENTING, Annette | FANFING, Dakota | MOORE, Demi |
| BERRY, Halle | FOSTER, Jodie | MALTHROW, Gwyneth |
| BREIL, Jessica | GUGINO, Cami | PAQUIN, Anna |
| BLANCHETT, Cate | HATHAWAY, Anne | RIZZI, Chrissie |
| BLETHYNN, Brenda | HUNTER, Holly | SWANK, Hilary |
| BLUNT, Emily | HUSTON, Anjelica | TYERON, Charize |
| CLOSE, Gemma | JOLIE, Angelina | THOMPSON, Emma |
| CONNELLY, Jennifer | KEENEY, Catherine | WATSON, Emily |
| DUSACQ, John | | |

The hidden movie title is: THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS

CROSSWORD 1831



ACROSS

- (Roman Catholic Church) The supreme ecclesiastical tribunal for cases appealed to the Holy See from diocesan courts.
- Of or relating to or produced by the glottis.
- The compass point that is one point west of due north.
- Tall fan palm of Africa and India and Malaysia yielding a hard wood and sweet sap that is a source of palm wine and sugar.
- A metal-bearing mineral valuable enough to be mined.
- Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- Consisting of or related to language.
- Fleshy and usually brightly colored cover of some seeds that develops from the ovule stalk and partially or entirely envelopes the seed.
- A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.
- An ancient region on the coast of western Asia Minor.
- The father of your father or mother.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- Fine powdery material such as dry earth or pollen that can be blown about in the air.
- A field covered with grass or herbage

- Having leadership guidance.
- Red Asian weaverbirds often kept as cage birds.
- United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- Disability of walking due to crippling of the legs or feet.
- The compass point midway between east and southeast.
- Of or relating to the kidneys.
- The organ that bears the ova of a flower.
- Tropical New World lizard with a long tail and large rectangular scales on the belly and a long tail.
- Any of various plants of the genus *Aralia*.
- A physician who is not a specialist but treats all illnesses.
- A lake in northwestern Russia north of St. Petersburg.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the rare earth group.
- An analgesic for mild pain.
- Beautiful daughter of Minos and Pasiphae.
- East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
- A word that can be used to refer to a person or place or thing.
- (Scotland) A slope or hillside.
- European mignonette cultivated as a source of yellow dye.
- Expletives used informally as intensifiers.
- (Old Testament) The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac.
- Not eaten or used up.
- A person who eats human flesh.
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- A language spoken by the Atakapa people of the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
- A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
- Fastener consisting of a resinous composition that is plastic when warm.
- Having a ridge or shaped like a ridge or the keel of a ship.
- A Russian river.
- A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A large building at an airport where aircraft can be stored and maintained.
- A complete metric system of units of measurement for scientists.
- A port city in southwestern Iran.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Being such by origin.
- (botany) Relating to or attached to the axis.

- Of or relating to abasia (inability to walk).
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
- One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
- Highly colored tropical freshwater fishes.
- Related on the mother's side.
- A woman gossip.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- (electronics) Of a circuit or device having an output that is proportional to the input.
- A period of time spent sleeping.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- The shore of a lake.
- 100 lwei equal 1 kwanza.
- Indigo bush.
- Large antelope with lightly spiraled horns of desert regions of North Africa.
- Capital of Armenia.
- Obvious and dull.
- A river in northern Italy that flows southeast into the Adriatic Sea.
- A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
- Administer an oil or ointment to.
- In bed.
- A quantity of no importance.
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
- A woolen cap of Scottish origin.
- (Old Testament) Adam's wife in Judeo-Christian mythology.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.

DOWN

- Of or relating to the kidneys.
- The organ that bears the ova of a flower.
- Tropical New World lizard with a long tail and large rectangular scales on the belly and a long tail.
- Any of various plants of the genus *Aralia*.
- A physician who is not a specialist but treats all illnesses.
- A lake in northwestern Russia north of St. Petersburg.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the rare earth group.
- An analgesic for mild pain.
- Beautiful daughter of Minos and Pasiphae.
- East Indian tart yellow berrylike fruit.
- A word that can be used to refer to a person or place or thing.
- (Scotland) A slope or hillside.
- European mignonette cultivated as a source of yellow dye.
- Expletives used informally as intensifiers.
- (Old Testament) The wife of Abraham and mother of Isaac.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

OWN MOVIES
ACTION

00:35 Dead Again In Tombstone
02:20 Bloodsport
03:55 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II
06:15 Being Evel
08:00 Bloodsport
09:35 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II
11:55 Batman: The Killing Joke
13:20 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
15:45 I Am Number Four
17:40 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation
19:55 Warcraft: The Beginning
23:30 We Still Kill The Old Way

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:50 Lone Star Law
01:45 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Bad Dog
03:35 Escape To Chimp Eden
04:00 Going Ape
04:25 Whale Wars
05:15 Whale Wars
06:02 North America
06:49 Lone Star Law
07:36 Meet The Orangutans
08:00 Meet The Orangutans
08:25 Escape To Chimp Eden
08:50 Going Ape
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Bad Dog
11:05 North America
12:00 Escape To Chimp Eden
12:28 Going Ape
12:55 Whale Wars
13:50 Whale Wars
14:45 Bad Dog
15:40 North America
16:35 Lone Star Law
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 The Bronx Zoo
19:20 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
20:15 Bad Dog
21:10 Going Ape
21:38 Going Ape
22:05 The Bronx Zoo
23:00 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
23:55 North America

BBC FIRST

00:40 New Tricks
01:35 Holby City
02:30 Doctors
03:00 Eastenders
03:30 Benidorm
04:20 Father Brown
05:05 New Tricks
06:00 Doctors
06:30 Casualty
07:20 Holby City
08:15 Doctors
11:15 Casualty
12:10 Holby City
13:05 Eastenders
15:05 Casualty
16:00 Doctors
16:30 Doctors
17:00 Doctors
18:30 Bad Move
19:00 New Tricks
20:00 Father Brown
20:55 Death In Paradise
21:55 Poldark
22:50 Doctors
23:20 Bad Move
23:45 New Tricks

crime & investigation network

00:00 The First 48
01:00 The First 48
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
03:00 Fred Dineage: Murder Casebook
04:00 The First 48

05:00 The First 48
06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
07:00 It Takes A Killer
08:00 The First 48
09:00 Escaping Polygamy
10:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
11:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
12:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
13:00 The First 48
14:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
15:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
16:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 It Takes A Killer
20:00 American Murder
21:00 O.J.: Guilty In Vegas
23:00 Killer Kids

Discovery Family

00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
01:20 Strip The Cosmos
02:10 Freaks Of Nature
02:35 Freaks Of Nature
03:00 Prehistoric
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made: Sports Equipment
06:20 Destroyed In Seconds
06:40 Destroyed In Seconds
07:00 Ultimate Survival
07:50 How It's Made: Sports Equipment
08:40 Destroyed In Seconds
09:05 Destroyed In Seconds
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Prehistoric
11:10 Don't Blink
12:00 The Carbonaro Effect
12:25 The Carbonaro Effect
12:50 How It's Made: Sports Equipment
13:40 Destroyed In Seconds
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 Prehistoric
17:00 Don't Blink
17:50 Deception With Keith Barry
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 Don't Blink
21:35 Don't Blink
22:00 Deception With Keith Barry
22:50 Prehistoric
23:40 Ultimate Survival

ID

00:50 Once Bitten: People Magazine Investigates
01:45 Hollywood Horror Story: People Magazine...
02:40 Killer Confessions
03:35 Murder Book
04:30 Once Bitten: People Magazine Investigates
05:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 Evil Stepmothers
08:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
08:25 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
09:15 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
10:10 Evil Stepmothers
11:05 I'd Kill For You
12:00 Married With Secrets
12:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Evil Stepmothers
15:40 Florida's Craziest Crimes
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
18:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
18:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Evil-In-Law
21:10 Florida's Craziest Crimes
22:05 Grave Secrets
23:00 Murder Online
23:55 Forbidden: Dying For Love

Disney HD

00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Jessie
07:25 Tangled: The Series
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 Stuck In The Middle
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:25 Lolirock
10:50 Lolirock
11:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
11:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
12:05 Hank Zipzer
12:30 Alex & Co.
12:55 Alex & Co.
13:20 Lolirock
13:45 Lolirock
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
15:00 The Zhuzhus
15:15 K.C. Undercover
15:40 Bunk'd
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 Elena Of Avalor
16:35 Bizaardvark
17:00 Tangled: The Series
17:25 Descendants Wicked World
17:30 Stuck In The Middle
17:55 K.C. Undercover
18:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
18:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
19:10 Star Wars Forces Of Destiny
19:15 Bunk'd
19:40 Girl Meets World
20:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:10 Liv And Maddie
20:35 Jessie
21:00 Tangled: The Series
21:25 K.C. Undercover
21:50 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:15 Bizaardvark
22:40 Stuck In The Middle
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:45 Lolirock

Disney Junior

00:15 PJ Masks
00:40 PJ Masks
01:05 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Disney Hugglemonster
03:05 Art Attack
03:30 The Hive

03:40 Loopdidoo
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
04:10 Art Attack
04:35 Loopdidoo
04:50 Calimero
05:05 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:00 Art Attack
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
06:45 Loopdidoo
07:00 Henry Hugglemonster
07:15 Calimero
07:30 PJ Masks
08:00 P-King Duckling
08:25 Jungle Junction
08:40 Special Agent Oso
09:00 Handy Manny
09:15 PJ Masks
09:30 Puppy Dog Pals
10:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:55 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
11:50 The Lion Guard
12:45 Sofia The First
13:35 PJ Masks
14:30 Doc McStuffins
14:55 P-King Duckling
15:20 Vampirina
15:45 Sofia The First
16:10 Puppy Dog Pals
16:35 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:00 PJ Masks
17:25 Mission Force One: Connect And Protect Shorts
17:35 Miles From Tomorrow
18:00 Goldie & Bear
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals
18:55 Sofia The First
19:25 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:10 The Lion Guard
20:35 P-King Duckling
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:25 Sofia The First
22:50 P-King Duckling
23:20 Puppy Dog Pals
23:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers

Discovery Channel HD

00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Kings Of The Wild
01:50 Deadliest Job Interview
02:35 Man v Expert
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska Monsters
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Backroad Bounty
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska Monsters
08:20 Backroad Bounty
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Alaska Monsters
10:45 Deadliest Catch
11:30 Yukon Men
12:20 Backroad Bounty
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Deadliest Catch
14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Kings Of The Wild
16:15 Deadliest Job Interview
17:05 Man v Expert
17:50 Blowing Up History
18:40 Tesla's Death Ray: A Murder

Declassified

19:25 Yukon Men
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Diesel Brothers
21:50 Gear Dogs
22:40 Fast N' Loud
23:30 Gold Rush

XD

06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow
07:15 Mech-X4
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Walk The Prank
08:10 Walk The Prank

08:35 Right Now Kapow
09:00 Right Now Kapow
09:25 Mighty Med
09:50 Mighty Med
10:20 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
10:45 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat
12:25 Two More Eggs
12:30 Kid vs. Kat
12:55 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:20 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:45 Supa Strikas
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 Right Now Kapow
15:05 Right Now Kapow
15:30 Milo Murphy's Law
15:55 Two More Eggs
16:00 The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody
16:25 Lab Rats
16:50 Lab Rats
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Supa Strikas
18:30 Marvel's Ant-Man
18:35 Walk The Prank
19:00 Gravity Falls
19:25 Milo Murphy's Law
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Mech-X4
20:20 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Kid vs. Kat
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am

EHD

00:10 The Platinum Life
01:00 The Platinum Life
01:50 E! News
02:50 Botched
03:40 Botched
04:35 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Botched
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 Botched
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 WAGs LA
10:10 WAGs LA
11:05 WAGs LA
12:00 E! News Middle East
12:15 Citizen Rose
14:05 WAGs Atlanta
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 My Fabulous Me
16:40 My Fabulous Me
17:05 My Fabulous Me
17:35 Celebrity Style Story
18:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
19:00 E! News
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 WAGs LA
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

itv HD CHOICE

00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
03:25 The Royal Variety Performance 2016
05:40 Royal Stories
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
08:05 The Royal Variety Performance 2016

10:25 Royal Stories
10:55 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street

F2 HD

00:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
00:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
01:00 UFO Files
02:00 UFO Files
03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Clash Of The Gods
05:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
05:55 Smartest Guy In The Room
06:20 UFO Files
07:10 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
08:00 UFO Files
09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Clash Of The Gods
12:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
12:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
13:00 United Stuff Of America
14:00 UFO Files
15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Clash Of The Gods
18:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
19:00 United Stuff Of America
20:00 UFO Files
21:00 America's Book Of Secrets
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Bible Secrets Revealed

HISTORY HD

00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers Best Of's
02:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
03:40 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
04:30 Swamp People
05:15 Swamp People
06:00 Swamp People
06:50 Swamp People
07:40 Swamp People
08:30 Swamp People
09:20 Swamp People
10:10 Mountain Men
11:00 Mountain Men
11:50 Mountain Men
12:40 Mountain Men
13:30 Mountain Men
14:20 Swamp People
15:10 Swamp People
16:00 Swamp People
17:40 Swamp People
18:30 Ultimate Wheels
19:20 Counting Cars
20:10 Fifth Gear
21:00 American Pickers
21:50 Pawn Stars
22:15 Storage Wars
22:40 Forged In Fire
23:30 Ultimate Wheels

NAT GEO people HD

00:15 Places We Go
00:45 Miguel's Feasts
01:10 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
01:40 Places We Go
02:05 Places We Go
02:35 My Pacific Quest
03:30 Raw Travel
03:55 Raw Travel

TV Listings

04:25 The Food Files
 04:50 The Food Files
 05:20 A Is For Apple
 05:45 The Food Files
 06:15 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
 06:40 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 07:10 Places We Go
 07:35 Places We Go
 08:05 My Pacific Quest
 09:00 Raw Travel
 09:25 Raw Travel
 09:55 The Food Files
 10:20 The Food Files
 10:50 A Is For Apple
 11:15 The Food Files
 11:45 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
 12:10 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 12:40 Places We Go
 13:05 Places We Go
 13:35 My Pacific Quest
 14:30 Raw Travel
 14:55 Raw Travel
 15:25 The Food Files
 15:50 The Food Files
 16:20 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
 16:45 A Is For Apple
 17:15 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 17:40 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
 18:10 Places We Go
 18:35 Places We Go
 19:05 My Pacific Quest
 20:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
 20:30 A Is For Apple
 21:00 The Food Files
 21:30 The Food Files
 22:00 Raw Travel
 22:25 Raw Travel
 22:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 23:20 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
 23:50 Places We Go

18:25 The Miracle Cheetah
 19:20 Wild 24
 20:10 Nordic Wild
 21:00 Python Hunters
 21:50 Borneo's Secret Kingdom
 22:40 The Miracle Cheetah
 23:30 Shark Eden



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 00:36 Rabbids Invasion
 01:00 Rabbids Invasion
 01:24 Sanjay And Craig
 01:48 Sanjay And Craig
 02:12 Winx Club
 02:36 Winx Club
 03:00 Harvey Beaks
 03:24 Harvey Beaks
 03:48 The Loud House
 04:12 The Loud House
 04:36 Breadwinners
 05:00 Breadwinners
 05:24 Get Blake
 05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
 06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
 06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 07:24 Rabbids Invasion
 07:48 Get Blake
 08:12 Harvey Beaks
 08:36 Sanjay And Craig
 09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
 09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 09:48 Henry Danger
 10:12 Game Shakers
 10:36 Regal Academy
 11:00 Winx Club
 11:24 Harvey Beaks
 11:48 Harvey Beaks
 12:12 Harvey Beaks
 12:36 Harvey Beaks
 13:00 Harvey Beaks
 13:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
 13:48 Hunter Street
 14:12 I Am Frankie
 14:36 The Thundermans
 15:00 Rabbids Invasion
 15:24 School Of Rock
 15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
 16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 16:36 The Loud House
 17:00 Massive Monster Mayhem
 17:24 I Am Frankie
 17:48 Hunter Street
 18:12 Henry Danger
 18:36 Rabbids Invasion
 19:00 School Of Rock
 19:24 Game Shakers
 19:48 The Thundermans
 20:12 Regal Academy
 20:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
 21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 21:24 Sanjay And Craig
 21:48 Rabbids Invasion
 22:12 Breadwinners
 22:36 Harvey Beaks
 23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
 23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
 23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



00:17 Kid-E-Cats
 00:22 Shimmer And Shine
 00:44 Sunny Day
 01:07 Max & Ruby
 01:30 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:40 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:52 The Day Henry Met
 01:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:41 Paw Patrol
 02:52 Kid-E-Cats
 02:58 Kid-E-Cats
 03:04 Shimmer And Shine
 03:26 Nella The Princess Knight
 03:38 Paw Patrol
 04:01 The Day Henry Met
 04:07 Max & Ruby
 04:29 Dora The Explorer
 04:50 Sunny Day
 05:11 Nella The Princess Knight
 05:35 Shimmer And Shine
 05:59 Wallykazam!
 06:21 Zack & Quack
 06:32 The Day Henry Met

06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 07:00 Rusty Rivets
 07:13 Paw Patrol
 07:37 Dora The Explorer
 08:00 Nella The Princess Knight
 08:10 Kid-E-Cats
 08:15 Kid-E-Cats
 08:21 Bubble Guppies
 08:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 09:05 Paw Patrol
 09:07 Paw Patrol
 09:30 Shimmer And Shine
 09:53 Nella The Princess Knight
 10:15 The Day Henry Met
 10:21 Paw Patrol
 10:44 Rusty Rivets
 11:07 Wallykazam!
 11:30 Bubble Guppies
 11:54 Team Umizoomi
 12:17 Kid-E-Cats
 12:22 Shimmer And Shine
 12:44 Sunny Day
 13:07 Max & Ruby
 13:30 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
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 22:15 The Day Henry Met
 22:21 Paw Patrol
 22:44 Rusty Rivets
 23:07 Wallykazam!
 23:30 Bubble Guppies
 23:54 Team Umizoomi



00:10 Coat Of Many Colors
 01:40 Kung Fu Panda
 03:15 A Royal Christmas
 04:50 A Little Game
 06:25 Coat Of Many Colors
 07:55 Lego DC: Justice League
 Gotham City Breakout
 09:20 Kung Fu Panda
 10:55 Capture The Flag
 12:35 The Secret Life Of Pets
 14:05 The Sound Of Music Live!
 16:25 All She Wishes
 18:00 The Borrowers
 19:30 Capture The Flag
 21:10 The Secret Life Of Pets
 22:40 All She Wishes



00:00 Neighbors 2: Sorority Rising
 01:35 Growing Up And Other Lies
 03:10 Pitch Perfect 2
 05:05 Leap Of Faith
 06:55 Big Momma's House 2
 08:35 Who Gets The Dog?
 10:15 Love The Coopers
 12:05 Leap Of Faith
 13:55 Big Momma's House 2
 15:35 The Guilt Trip

17:15 Tyler Perry's Boo: A Madea Halloween
 19:00 SuperBob
 20:25 The Longest Yard
 22:20 Road Trip: Beer Pong



00:25 On My Way
 02:30 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete
 04:30 We Are Many
 06:35 Operation Avalanche
 08:25 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete
 10:25 We Are Many
 12:25 One True Thing
 14:35 Forsaken
 16:15 Newsies: The Broadway Musical
 18:40 Tumbledown
 20:35 Bulworth
 22:30 Stop-Loss



00:35 Ploddy Police Car
 02:00 Dinofroz The Origin
 03:35 The Emperor's Secret
 05:10 Operation Arctic
 06:50 A.R.C.H.I.E.
 08:25 Hocus Pocus Alfie Atkins
 09:50 Quest For A Heart
 11:20 Mia And The Migoo
 13:00 Dinofroz The Origin
 14:35 The Emperor's Secret
 16:10 Beyond Beyond
 17:35 Quest For A Heart
 19:05 The Apple & The Worm
 20:30 Last Wizard
 21:55 Beyond Beyond
 23:20 Hocus Pocus Alfie Atkins



00:00 Scary Movie 4
 01:30 The Internship
 03:30 Dirty Dancing
 05:40 Seven Years In Tibet
 08:00 Brooklyn
 09:55 Loch Ness
 11:40 Last Chance Harvey
 13:15 The Break-Up
 15:05 Tombstone
 17:15 The Big Year
 19:00 Last Chance Harvey
 20:35 Reality Bites
 22:15 Training Day



00:40 Mythbusters
 01:30 How Do They Do It?
 01:55 Food Factory
 02:20 Mysteries Of The Missing
 03:10 Alien Encounters
 04:00 Nextworld
 04:48 Mythbusters
 05:36 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Food Factory
 06:24 Mysteries Of The Missing
 07:12 Alien Encounters
 08:00 How Do They Do It?
 08:26 Nextworld
 09:14 Mythbusters
 10:02 Alien Encounters
 10:50 How Do They Do It?
 11:14 Food Factory
 11:38 Mysteries Of The Missing
 12:26 Nextworld
 13:14 Mythbusters
 14:02 How Do They Do It?
 14:26 Food Factory
 14:50 Alien Encounters
 15:38 Nextworld
 16:26 Mysteries Of The Missing
 17:14 Mythbusters
 18:02 Alien Encounters
 18:50 Nextworld
 19:40 Mythbusters
 20:30 Strip The Cosmos
 21:20 How Do They Do It?
 21:45 Food Factory
 22:10 Alien Encounters
 23:00 You Have Been Warned
 23:50 Nextworld



00:45 Confidence
 02:15 Speakeasy
 03:45 Fifteen And Pregnant
 05:15 Dirty Dancing : Havana Nights
 06:40 Once
 08:10 Breakfast Of Champions
 09:50 Babel
 12:00 Dirty Pretty Things
 13:30 Being Flynn
 15:15 Confidence
 16:45 Kinky Boots
 18:30 Wedding Daze
 20:00 Avengers: Age Of Ultron
 22:15 Valkyrie



00:00 Married At First Sight
 01:00 Married At First Sight
 02:00 Mistresses
 03:00 House Of DVF
 04:00 Married At First Sight: The First Year
 05:00 Project Runway
 06:00 Married At First Sight
 07:00 Married At First Sight
 08:00 Mistresses
 09:00 House Of DVF
 10:00 Married At First Sight: The First Year
 11:00 Project Runway
 12:00 Married At First Sight
 13:00 Married At First Sight
 14:00 Mistresses
 15:00 House Of DVF
 16:00 Married At First Sight: The First Year
 17:00 Mistresses
 18:00 Devious Maids
 19:00 Devious Maids
 20:00 Project Runway All Stars
 21:00 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show 2017
 22:00 Fashion Star
 23:00 Mistresses



00:20 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 00:42 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 01:05 90 Days To Wed
 01:50 The Spouse House
 02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 03:20 Our Little Family
 04:05 Little Miss Atlanta
 04:50 Outdaughters: Busby
 05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
 06:00 Our Little Family
 06:22 Say Yes To The Dress
 06:45 Our Little Family
 07:07 Say Yes To The Dress
 07:30 Our Little Family
 07:52 Say Yes To The Dress
 08:15 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 08:37 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 09:00 Cake Boss
 09:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 09:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 10:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 10:32 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 10:55 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 11:17 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 11:40 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 12:02 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 12:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 12:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 13:10 Iyanla: Fix My Life
 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 14:40 Cake Boss
 15:02 Cake Boss
 15:25 Cake Boss
 15:47 Cake Boss
 16:10 Cake Boss
 16:35 Cake Boss
 17:00 Hodges Half Dozen
 17:50 Cake Boss
 18:20 Cake Boss
 18:50 Outdaughters: Busby
 19:40 Cake Boss

20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
 20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
 21:00 Kate Plus 8
 21:50 Little People, Big World
 22:40 Extraordinary Pregnancies
 23:30 Return To Amish



00:05 Detroiters
 00:30 Teachers
 00:55 Tosh.0
 01:20 Tosh.0
 01:45 Tosh.0
 02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
 02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
 03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 03:23 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
 03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
 04:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
 04:40 Workaholics
 05:05 Workaholics
 05:30 Workaholics
 05:55 Workaholics
 06:20 Workaholics
 06:50 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 07:15 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 07:40 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 08:05 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 08:30 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 08:55 The Dude Perfect Show
 09:20 The Dude Perfect Show
 09:45 I Live With Models
 10:10 I Live With Models
 10:35 I Live With Models
 11:00 Kroll Show
 11:25 Kroll Show
 11:50 Kroll Show
 12:15 Kroll Show
 12:40 Kroll Show
 13:05 Disaster Date
 13:30 Disaster Date
 13:55 Lip Sync Battle
 14:20 Lip Sync Battle
 14:45 Ridiculousness Arabia
 15:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
 15:35 Ridiculousness Arabia
 16:00 I Live With Models
 16:30 I Live With Models
 16:55 Lip Sync Battle UK
 17:20 Lip Sync Battle UK
 17:45 Friends
 18:08 Friends
 18:31 Friends
 18:54 Friends
 19:17 Friends
 19:40 Workaholics
 20:05 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
 20:35 Ridiculousness Arabia
 21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
 22:00 Natasha Leggero: Live From Bimbo
 22:45 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
 23:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
 23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:15 According To Jim
 00:40 According To Jim
 01:05 The Middle
 01:55 Gary Unmarried
 02:20 Malcolm In The Middle
 02:45 Mad Love
 03:10 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 04:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 04:50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 05:40 Malcolm In The Middle
 06:05 Mad Love
 06:30 The Orville
 07:20 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 08:10 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 09:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 09:50 The Simpsons
 10:15 The Last Man On Earth
 10:40 Malcolm In The Middle
 11:05 Mad Love
 11:30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 12:20 The Orville

Stars

**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

Aries, your confidence is boundless; you long for a new romantic involvement or reigniting an established one. Restless energy runs rampant even as you search for something to satisfy it; happiness could very likely be found in your own backyard! You could walk a risky path as you seek investment opportunities or perhaps this indicates a romantic encounter. You save the day when a friend or neighbor has an unexpected situation and you are called to help; this could refer to plumbing or wiring. You see a way to spend less money maintaining your home or office; have you been looking into solar or wind energy you keep your thoughts and ideas to yourself this evening as you give serious thought to making changes at home and possibly work, Aries.

**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

Taurus, you go inside for an honest look at the workings of your life and how your choices affect this. Your desire to help could be viewed as intrusive and you could be regarded as a busybody; remember that you should take control of your life, not the life of others. You take time out of the rush and figure out how to breathe new life into your work situation. Working with a group brings success. Your leadership skills are required on a special project no one else knows how to accomplish. A movie entertains and takes you away from reality for a bit. As you clean out drawers and closets you rediscover something you thought lost; this could indicate an heirloom. You examine something closely in order to figure out what makes it work and how, Taurus.

**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

Gemini, getting your thoughts across to others is easy and productive. Confidence levels are high just now and others notice this as you complete a certain difficult task. You set your goals higher as you come to realize anything is possible if you believe and work. Your new positive attitude takes you a long way today and into the month. Information you uncover could start some emotional reactions for the better if presented in the right way; think before you share this with the people involved. You become connected to a neighbor in a new way through someone who is ill or in dire need of help. Tonight brings an opportunity to create a new, exotic meal for family or friends; you use a special ingredient that adds some unusual flavor for all, Gemini.

**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

Cancer, the new cycle you have entered emphasizes confidence, positivity and belief. You may be willing to take chances on a deep emotional level. This could indicate a new romance or another type of serious relationship. Someone younger watches and follows your example. You experience a sort of restlessness that demands your attention. Your input on a new project is required by someone in charge; smooth progress is indicated for some time to come. You discover an item that's been missing for a long time. A good deed you did a while ago comes back in the form of an invitation to lunch or dinner. The day ends with your unique and enjoyable qualities being highlighted as you entertain a small group of friends at home, Cancer.

**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Leo, someone younger could push a challenge to the point of bitter confrontation. Your intentions are good, but be certain they are clear. Guard against yours, or the feelings of others, being hurt when unnecessary; good results are possible when handled with care. Time spent with jovial, like-minded people raises your spirits; compliments on your clothes or other accessories make your day much better. Abundance is possible when you discover a new means of making extra money that's a good match for your interests. You could be misled if you're reckless in making decisions without researching the facts. A mentor suggests a meeting this evening over delicious food and desert in a place filled with encouragement and positive vibrations, Leo.

**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

Virgo, your quirks and unique ways of going through life are at the fore; you're in the process of accepting who you are and figuring out where to go from here. You enjoy a sense of being comfortable in your own skin. A new circumstance requires your specific talents and ideas; this could indicate a new job or hobby that becomes valuable. Loved ones come together to discuss an important issue; you feel humbled by enjoying the life and family you have been blessed with. Confidence levels rise as you approach a new assignment or project you're challenged by; chin up, you know you can do this! You enjoy stretching the bounds of your emotions as you consider entering a new romantic relationship; if a current relationship is indicated, it's firing up, Virgo!

**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

Libra, you have high hopes and high confidence levels; you're required to take a project from zero to hero mode in a short period of time. Teamwork is key; you seem to be the chosen one to lead, and this gives you an opportunity to try something new. Someone asks your opinion and actually listens and follows your good advice. Communication skills are high and your message is clearly received; a challenge arises from this but passes quickly. You're in the mood for a new love or to rekindle a current flame; it's up to you to make this happen. Your imagination runs wild later when you have to tend to a few details; if anyone can fix this, you can! The urge to see a newly released movie or read a best seller gets your attention and tonight's the night, Libra.

**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

Scorpio, a difficult project at work grows more complicated; you figure this out, but not without great effort and team work. Your skills grow more proficient as you learn about new machinery or methods. This is a phase in which cleaning out closets, drawers and dark corners is important; this could indicate material or emotional cleansing. A friend is having a hard time and there's nothing you can do but sympathize; just being there could mean more than you know. Your taste is expensive, but you feel you're worth it. Personal friction is strongly indicated; this could be repaired if you let go of your pride. An opportunity for continuing education on something work related becomes known. Be mindful of your spending as it could get way out of hand, Scorpio.

**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

Sagittarius, standing up for the rights of friends or loved ones takes on an important meaning. Your connections to people in positions of authority are useful in your attempts at facilitating justice. Social issues could cause a stir among friends. You feel more positive about yourself after working hard to change. You don't shy away from using new tactics to get what you want; amazing new high-tech gadgets could be a big help. You may long for excitement and perhaps even some mystery to solve! Decisions or choices relating to work, job, career should be put on pause until your concentration approves in this area. You could experience a lack of interest in work or domestic duties. Take your mind off the events of the day and rest later, Sagittarius.

**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

Capricorn, you're in tune with those around you and they know it. Be prepared to be called upon for advice regarding something extremely personal and sensitive in nature. Your environment is overall supportive and encouraging. Convincing people to go your way on a project is easy but one person could present a challenge. If tempers flare, you do your very best to avoid any confrontations. Watch for instigators! The energy of ambition is strong and you're able to by-pass anyone or anything that could cause blockage; be careful, someone's watching closely. You could let someone in emotionally you might not ordinarily accept. Some consider you far too independent for their purposes. A book you love helps end your day with optimism, Capricorn.

**Aquarius (January 20-February 18)**

Aquarius, your suggestions could be rejected by a boss or supervisor. Pick yourself up and continue looking for solutions this person will approve of; the cycle you have entered supports this. It could seem you encounter opposition at work and home; be patient and watch this vibration disappear. The plans you present are directly opposite of what the team wants; slow down and let this unfold. If you're able, exercise helps your mind and body; a walk, yoga or dancing could make a huge difference for you now. Decisions may seem elusive and foggy today but this could change tomorrow or the next day. If you feel disconnect, relax and gather your thoughts over a nice dinner and a game of cards this evening with a loved one, Aquarius.

**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

Pisces, you're surrounded by those you love and enjoy. There's acceptance of your thoughts and ideas; you feel satisfaction and accomplishment. Although it's hard, you may actually feel that it's okay to have the opinions you have; you have entered a phase of being realistic. There could be a reconciliation between you someone you love. You take an emotional trip down memory lane; this could indicate the family you grew up with or the family you have raised. This isn't a time to make serious choices involving a change of job or educational plans. You could suspect someone of doing something that's shady or unjust. You may be experiencing thoughts that are less than appropriate; this could turn into a dangerous, negative preoccupation if you aren't careful, Pisces.

COUNTRY CODES

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

Health

Conservationists use hi-tech tracker collars

LIBREVILLE: Ever tried to put a GPS real-time tracking collar on a five-ton animal? Well in Gabon conservationists have begun trying to use the devices on elephants; tracking and drugging the animals, before attaching the high-tech gadgets in a bid to stop poachers and ivory trafficking. But it is not a simple task. Each operation needs around five to seven men, including a vet, scouts and trackers, to guide the group through dense jungle and locate the often shy animals. "They have to fit one or two GPS collars a day," says

Jean-Baptiste Squarcini, general secretary of Gabon's national parks agency (ANPN). "It's very dangerous with our men repeatedly being charged by elephants." Once an elephant is spotted, a vet will move forward and use a compressed air rifle to fire a dart carrying etorphine: a semi-synthetic opioid more than 1,000 times more powerful than morphine. "Too heavy a dose will kill the elephant. Too weak, it can escape. You have to get it right," Squarcini notes. "When it has been hit, you have to be ready to avoid

a possible charge."

Like a good hangover

After the elephant is asleep on the ground, the team carries out a health check and takes samples while a giant black GPS collar is fitted. The whole process takes around 10 minutes and the team then takes cover, sometimes climbing up trees, before the animal is woken up with an antidote. "The animal wakes, a little stunned, like from a good hangover," smiles Squarcini.—AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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Kuwait Times Classifieds

Friday, February 9, 2018

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

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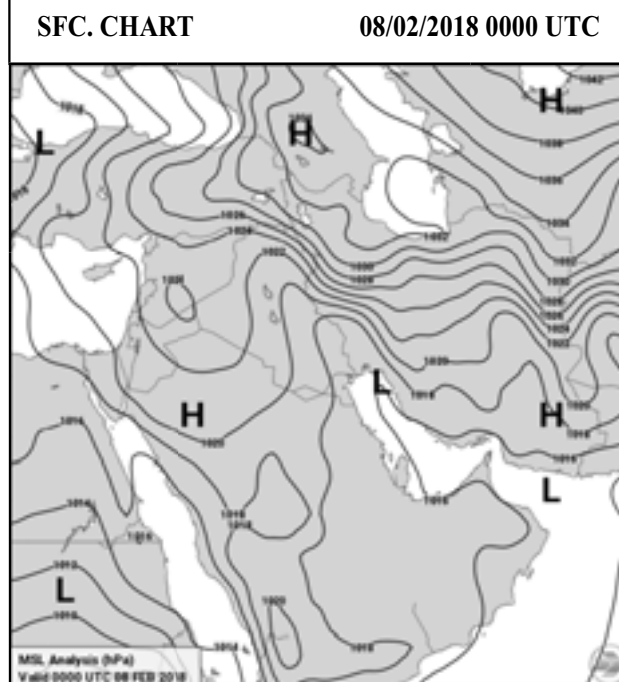
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Warm with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 30 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
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STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	25 °C	16 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	27 °C	09 °C
ABDALY	29 °C	11 °C
BUBYAN	00 °C	0- °C
JAHRA	29 °C	14 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	23 °C	13 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	17 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	16 °C
NUWAISIB	25 °C	13 °C
WAFRA	31 °C	11 °C
SALMY	28 °C	09 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	02/09	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Saturday	02/10	Partly cloudy with a chance for fog forming at night	26 °C	09 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Sunday	02/11	Partly cloudy to cloudy	26 °C	09 °C	VRB	06 - 24 km/h
Monday	02/12	Partly cloudy to cloudy	27 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:12
Sunrise	06:33
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:09
Sunset	17:32
Isha	18:50

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	28 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	86 %
MIN. RH	14 %
MAX. Wind	S 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

WANTED TEACHER

Needed Math's Teacher for Foreign School Studied 10th Grade.

Please contact for more details in:
(965) 22445150 / 1 / 2 / 3
Fax: 22431157/ 22467670

LOST

It is notified for the information that my Original Qualifying Examination Certificate of Main Secondary Examination of Year 2010 and Roll No. 6104582 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Name of the candidate Reem Sheikh Abdul Rehman

Tel. 99612224

SITUATION VACANT

House Driver required for reputed Kuwaiti family. Must have transferable visa and English speaking. Please contact: 66079496. (C 5378) 5-2-2018

SITUATION VACANT

A Kuwaiti family looking for a decent driver. Who speaks English or Arabic with a valid Kuwaiti license and above 30 years. Salary negotiable. Please call 99788463 (C 5380) 8-2-2018

CHANGE OF NAME

I, HYDER ALI SHAIK S/o KHADAR SAHEB SHAIK holder of Indian Passport No. L4103327 & Civil ID No. 264072704364 has changed my name from HYDER ALI SHAIK to HYDER ALI SYED hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of HYDER ALI SYED. (C 5379) 6-2-2018

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

EMERGENCY



112

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

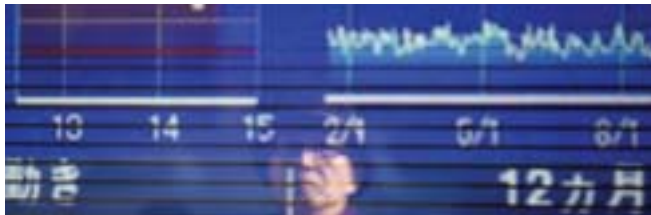
Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Business

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CARACAS: Close-up of the strap of a purse made by Venezuelan Wilmer Rojas, out of Bolivar banknotes in Caracas.—AFP

Worthless currency becomes art in Venezuela

Inflation in oil-rich, cash-poor economy churns on

CARACAS: Venezuela's currency has lost so much value that people simply throw away their small bills—they are virtually worthless anyway. Enter Wilmer Rojas, 25, who scoops them up off the street, uses an origami-like folding technique, a needle and thread to make handbags with an eye to selling them—maybe even abroad, where people have real money. Rojas can use as many as 800 bills to make such a purse. And if you add up the face value of all that money, it's enough to buy... half a kilo of rice.

Rojas and his wife have three kids to feed, and another is on the way. "People throw them away because they are no good to buy anything. No one even accepts them anymore," Rojas said outside a subway station, where he also sells coffee and cigarettes in addition to his unusual bag-weaving work. Meanwhile, inflation in this oil-rich, cash-poor economy churns on and on: since August, the bolivar has lost 87 percent of its value against the euro.

Inflation this year is forecast by the

International Monetary Fund to come in at a staggering 13,000 percent. With two-, five- and 10-bolivar notes, "you can't even buy a piece of candy," Rojas says, explaining how he used 400 such bills to make a smaller handbag. Rojas then points to a queen's crown he made out of bolivar notes. "Here there are about 50,000 bolivars, which is maybe enough for a pack of cigarettes," he explains.

Play money
Rojas says he learned his craft from another makeshift artist. "You can use magazine paper or newspaper pulp, but currency notes are better because they are not worth anything, they are all the same size and you don't have to waste time cutting them," Rojas said. He hopes to start selling his creations soon. But

he fears Venezuela's economic crisis may foil his plans.

"Here, people barely have enough to put food on the table and are not going to shell out money for something that required a lot of work," he says. In downtown Caracas,

other hungry artisans are selling woven bags like these. They get as much as 300,000 bolivars for one of them. That will buy you a kilo of meat. Economist Tamara Herrera said the fact that Venezuela's currency is now used as play money is the maximum

expression of how much value it has lost.

Venezuela devalued

With 1,000 two-bolivar notes that nobody wants, Jose Leon, a 26-year-old designer, began a protest on Instagram in

2016 that featured doctored notes and the hashtag #venezueladevaluada, or devalued Venezuela. Deadpool, the anti-hero in the Marvel comics, was the inspiration for his first work on currency notes, using his face to replace that of independence hero Simon Bolivar. Leon has also drawn the faces of "Star Wars" characters over that of Bolivar and other famous Venezuelans pictured on the notes.

Leon's customers live abroad and pay him up to \$20 per piece of "money art." "With a bit of Wite-Out and some pens, I can raise the value of the currency by nearly 5,000 percent," Leon said at his workshop in San Cristobal, a city on Venezuela's border with Colombia. Leon is doing well with his art. But Rojas is still struggling to make money—in the meantime, he is using notes to make a carnival costume for his daughter. "These things are no good for buying anything. At least I am putting them to good use rather than throwing them away," said Rojas.—AFP

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You can't even buy
a piece of candy
”

Business

Shares fragile, US budget deal puts bonds on defensive

Sentiment in stock markets remains frail

LONDON: World stock markets remained on shaky ground yesterday as US bond yields crept back towards four-year highs after US congressional leaders reached a two-year budget deal to raise government spending by almost \$300 billion. While the deal was a rare display of bipartisanship that should stave off a government shutdown, it looks set to widen the US federal deficit further and could fan inflation—prompting the Federal Reserve to lift interest rates faster.

The Bank of England meets later in the day and is expected to say that another rate increase could be nearing as Britain's economy grows faster than expected. European stock markets opened the day lower, with blue-chip indexes in Frankfurt, Paris and London down 0.3-0.7 percent. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan ticked up 0.1 percent, but remained near six-week lows hit earlier this week amid a rout in world stocks.

In China, Shanghai's benchmark index hit a six-month low, even as data showed the country's trade performance in January had exceeded expectations. Investors remained wary after an aggressive selloff in equities in the past week on worries about the prospects of rising interest rates, which would shut off the liquidity spigot that has fed an exuberant rally in riskier assets.

Spending soars

Still, US stock futures traded higher, pointing to a firm opening for Wall Street shares after the US budget deal. "The scale of increase in spending was much larger than what markets were expecting just a few months ago. It will have as big an impact as tax cuts," said Tomoaki Shishido, fixed income analyst at Nomura Se-

curities. The Cboe Volatility Index, known as the VIX and often seen as investors' "fear gauge", fell 2.3 points to 27.73, but that was still more than twice the levels generally seen in the past few months.

Combined with an expected economic boost from President Donald Trump's planned tax cuts, the increased deficit spending could overheat already strong US growth and accelerate inflation to levels not seen over a decade. Such fears drove the 10-year US Treasury yield back up to 2.84 percent, near Monday's four-year peak of 2.885 percent. The Senate and the House were both expected to vote on the deal yesterday, amid some opposition on both sides of the aisle.

"The news yesterday has set up a test for 3 percent on 10-year Treasury yields," said Francois Savary, CIO at Prime Partners, a Swiss wealth manager. "They have made no effort to go for any consolidation, which shows they don't want to control what's happening with budget finances."

In Europe, bond yields were also higher, with the prospect of increased fiscal spending after Wednesday's coalition government deal in Germany adding to some upward pressure on yields.

BoE awaited

In currency markets, sterling was a touch weaker at \$1.3865, not far from Tuesday's two-week low of \$1.3838, ahead of a Bank of England meeting. The BoE is widely expected to keep rates on hold as it weighs up the impact of November's rate rise on the economy. Investors are more focused on whether any of the nine rate-setters vote for a hike at this meeting. That would be seen as adding to the likelihood of an increase in May, the next time the BoE is due to update its economic forecasts.

“As big an impact as tax cuts”



TOKYO: A man looks at a stock indicator showing government bond data report in Tokyo. — AFP

The budget deal in Washington supported the dollar against a broad range of currencies. At 0942 GMT it stood at 90.554, up 0.33 percent on the day. Europe's single currency dipped to \$1.2231, its lowest level in more than two weeks, while the dollar was 0.3 percent firmer at 109.66 Japanese yen. New Zealand's dollar fell to a four-week low at \$0.7190 after New Zealand's central bank lowered its forecasts for inflation right out to 2020 and said stock market volatility this week was a warning that investors were nervous about the risk of higher inflation and rising interest rates.

The Chinese yuan, which last month posted its biggest monthly gain ever, slipped back 0.5 percent to 6.3205 per dollar. Oil prices largely reversed earlier falls yesterday as a North Sea pipeline outage and record Chinese imports countered US crude production soaring past 10 million barrels per day.—Reuters

Wall Street's swoon doesn't worry economists... yet

WASHINGTON: Wall Street's nosedive this week and a spike in market volatility, surprising as they were, do not threaten US economic momentum, according to economists, some of whom even welcome the falling prices. But if there were a prolonged retreat in equities markets that could spill over into the real economy under some circumstances they say. "This was not that big of a bump in the equity market," William Dudley, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, said Wednesday during a conference.

The rocky few days of trading would have "virtually no consequence" for the larger economy, he said. The flag-ship Dow Jones Industrial Average shed 4.6 percent on Monday, posting its biggest single day point drop ever and sparking a global sell-off, but it recovered some of the losses in a wildly volatile session Tuesday. While Dudley noted that stocks remained well above their levels from a year ago, a sharp correction on Wall Street could still be something to worry about.

According to Oxford Economics, an average dip of 10 percent on world equities markets would shave 0.3 percentage points off of GDP growth for the Group of 7 major economies over two years. The fallout could be worrisome for consumer and business confidence. The rising market over the past year as Wall Street hit repeated records, gave a boost to American



BEIJING: Stock price movements are seen on a screen at a securities company in Beijing. — AFP

retirement accounts that has helped sustain consumer spending, a key driver of the US economy.

Even after this week's losses, the Dow is still up 37 percent since President Donald Trump's election in November 2016. He has repeatedly taken credit for Wall Street's heady run but was quiet Monday. But in a tweet Wednesday he seemed to criticize the market moves. "In the 'old days,' when good news was reported, the Stock Market would go up," the president said on Twitter. "Today, when good news is reported, the Stock Market goes down. Big mistake, and we have so much good (great) news about the economy!"—AFP

Greece returns to debt market with seven-year bond

ATHENS: Greece yesterday made another tentative return to markets with a seven-year bond, its first sale of the sort since the start of the economic crisis, officials said. A finance ministry source confirmed the issue, while another source with knowledge of the sale said Greece seeks to raise around 3.0 billion euros. The last seven-year bond, sold at an interest rate of six percent, was issued in April 2010 — days before the country publicly requested the first of its three EU-IMF bailouts. Greece currently has no real need to draw money from the bond markets as it is still receiving financial support at lower rates under its international bailout that ends in August.

However it is a psychological milestone, demonstrating that Greece is back on the road to weaning itself off bailout aid, as well as building a precautionary cash cushion. In July, Greece made its first return to debt markets after a three-year hiatus, selling three billion euros' worth of five-year bonds at 4.625 percent, lower than its previous outing in 2014. Athens had geared the sale for Tuesday but it was postponed amid global stock market turmoil earlier this week.—AFP

Business

German trade surplus shrinks for first time in eight years

Merkel's pact reaffirms commitment to a balanced budget

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Germany's trade surplus shrank for the first time since 2009 last year as imports outpaced exports in Europe's booming top economy, giving Berlin ammunition to ease criticism of its huge trade gap with other countries. The country's trade surplus unexpectedly fell to 245 billion euros from a record 249 billion in 2016, figures from federal statistics authority Destatis showed.

Germany routinely comes under fire over its massive trade surplus, with partners from Paris to Washington urging the government to address the chronic imbalance by doing more to encourage consumption at home, indirectly boosting other nations. In what may go some way to silencing those complaints, Destatis said imports soared by 8.3 percent last year to an all-time high of 1.03 trillion euros.

It marks the first time German imports have breached the psychologically significant trillion-euro barrier, and comes as the economy is humming, wages are high and unemployment is lower than ever. But Germany's exporters are also on a roll, benefiting from a robust global recovery. Exports shot up 6.3 percent to 1.3 trillion euros last year—another fresh record. "It's the typical German success story when it comes to exports," analyst Carsten Brzeski of ING Diba bank said.

The latest snapshot of the country's trade balance could make it easier for German policymakers to counter criticism of its massive surplus, he said. "They can say: this is what you

have been arguing for," said Brzeski. But insatiable appetite for German goods abroad means the irritation is likely to persist. "For the critics, the reduction is far too little," he said. "I expect the country will still have extremely high trade and current account surpluses in 2018."

Unfair

The 2017 figures showed that German demand was strongest for goods made inside the European Union, but there was also a nine-

percent jump in imports from the rest of the world, including the United States. Most of Germany's goods sold abroad meanwhile were bought by fellow EU member states, accounting for some 750 billion euros, up 6.3 percent on 2016. Looking ahead, observers say the recent strength of the euro may put the brakes on exports in coming months, as a stronger currency makes German goods more expensive abroad.

But Brzeski said exporters are unlikely to suffer much. "German exports have always proven to be resistant to a strong euro," he said. He added however that the euro's rise against the dollar in particular means Germany may "feel some negative impact" in its bilateral trade with the US. US President Donald Trump has been among the most vocal opponents of Germany's surpluses, calling his country's trade deficit with Germany "unfair" and wondering aloud why there are so many German cars on American roads. But he is far from alone.

European partners and global institutions like the International Monetary Fund have long

urged the German government to spend and invest more to push up demand and boost growth in other regions. German officials argue that the trade surplus reflects the strength of the "made in Germany" brand and insist there is little they can do to influence the spending of companies and individuals. But those arguments have done little to stop the grumbling. Just last month, IMF chief Lagarde called on Berlin to relax its cherished budgetary discipline and help "reduce global imbalances".

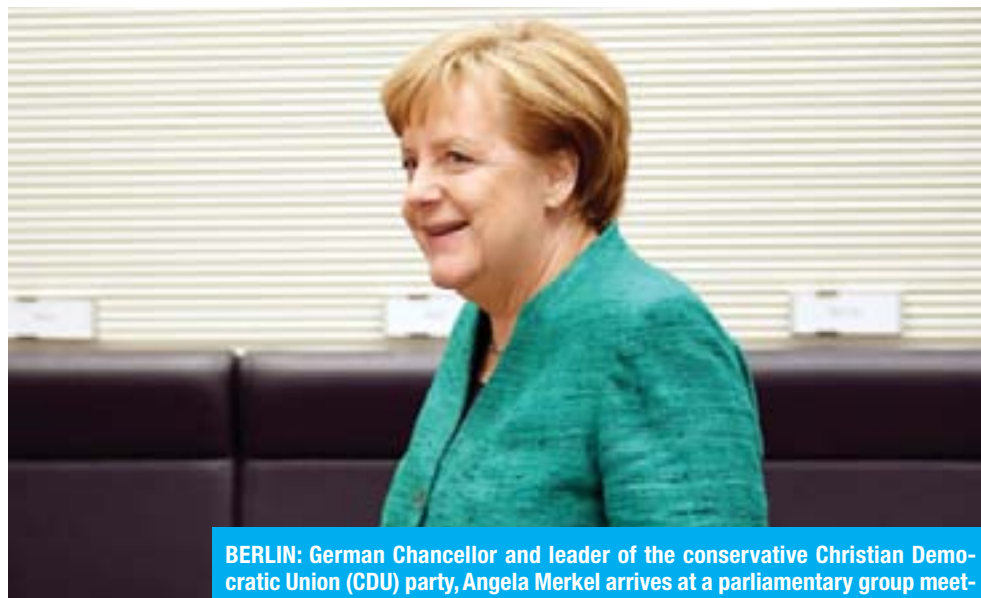
Merkel's spending plans

Those pleas have perhaps not fallen on deaf

ears. The coalition pact unveiled by Chancellor Angela Merkel's would-be new government on Wednesday reaffirmed Berlin's commitment to a balanced budget, but also pledged billions of euros in extra spending on education, childcare and internet infrastructure. Critics will also be cheered by rising salaries in Europe's powerhouse, with Destatis announcing that real earnings grew 0.8 percent in 2017. The country's most powerful union IG Metall, which represents nearly four million workers, this week won a 4.3-percent pay increase from employers, setting the tone for similar wage hikes in other industries.—AFP

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Feel some
negative impact

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BERLIN: German Chancellor and leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, Angela Merkel arrives at a parliamentary group meeting in Berlin.—AFP

An investor's best friend? Israel Diamond Exchange launches digital coins

RAMAT GAN, Israel: Israel's diamond exchange is turning to digital currencies to inject new life into a marketplace long ruled by cash and backroom handshakes, but it must first persuade traditionally conservative players that the technology can work. One of the world's largest diamond centers, the exchange hopes its virtual currency will make trading more efficient and less opaque.

Current transactions are "often carried out anonymously, with the shake of a hand and minimal documentation", according to a recent report by Israel's Justice Ministry. That murkiness has led the FBI and Europol to target the trade as a vehicle for money laundering and crime financing. Narrow profit margins between rough and polished gems make it hard

for polishers to get financing, and banks have cut back lending or pulled out entirely.

Backers of the digital currency program believe it will help address those issues. "We foresee alignment behind this currency because it's going to make things easy," Eli Avidar, managing director of the exchange, told Reuters in an interview. "This industry is facing challenges, and this is going to in a lot of aspects address those challenges ... the profitability element of the business, the speed of doing business, money laundering aspects and the problematic elements of banking nowadays," he said. The exchange is planning to launch two coins. The first, to be known as the Cut, will be available only to dealers on a peer-to-peer basis. Traders from around the world will receive digital wallets after being vetted by the exchange, similar to today's background checks. Each transaction will be verified in a matter of minutes and be available to the public on blockchain - a digital ledger maintained by a random group of peers - but the identity of who owns what will be kept private. The exchange can provide that information to regulators upon official request.

Difficult transfers

The Cut could solve increasing problems moving money between traders and retailers, one mid-size diamond dealer said. "Transfers of money have become increasingly difficult. With

banking regulation, even the smallest move becomes complicated. It can take days," said the dealer, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the process. "Buyers don't want to give the money till they get the stone, and sellers don't want to give the stone till they get the money."

He wanted to see how it will be regulated, however, which may take some time, given that the coins are being launched without any government regulation in place, as is typical in the cryptocurrency world. Bitcoin, the original cryptocurrency, has lost 70 percent of its value from its peak in December partly because of market concerns about a global regulatory clampdown. Many bitcoin backers say regulation should be welcomed.

A spokeswoman for the Economy Ministry, which oversees the diamond trade, says there has been no in-depth discussion yet on how the coins would be regulated. Presale of the Cut went live at the International Diamond Week that started on Monday. The coins should enter into use within a few weeks, said Avishai Shoushan, CEO of the year-old CARATS.IO, which created the coins for the exchange.

The coin is based on an index using 14 parameters, compared with just four characteristics used to price physical diamonds. Price is determined by an algorithm, because whereas gold is priced by the ounce or oil by the barrel, for example, diamonds are priced individually since each diamond is so different from the next.—Reuters

Business

China 'worried' over US trade relations as surplus narrows

Tensions raise specter of tit-for-tat trade war

BEIJING: China expressed concern yesterday over the US ramping up trade investigations as official data showed its surplus with America narrowed in January after reaching record levels last year. This week China announced an investigation into imports of a US agricultural product after President Donald Trump's administration launched a spate of new trade tariffs and probes into Chinese goods.

The Trump administration has shown no signs of letting up, with major decisions looming on Chinese aluminum, steel and intellectual property practices. The tensions are raising the specter of a tit-for-tat trade war between the world's two largest economies. "There has been an upward trend in US investigative organs looking into China's products and launching trade relief cases," said Ministry of Commerce spokesman Gao Feng during a press conference. "China is worried about this."

The US imposed new tariffs on Chinese-made solar panels and washing machines this year after hitting aluminum foil and plywood last year. China has so far held off from retaliating by adding new tariffs on US imports, but Beijing has indicated it may not show such restraint for much longer. This week China initiated an anti-dumping investigation into sorghum imports from the US, worth almost \$1 billion last year. That was a sliver of the \$14 billion in US soybean imports, which China hinted could be in its crosshairs as well. It was America's largest export to China last year.

Gao did not deny reports Chinese authorities were looking into soybean and cotton imports, after a journalist from state news agency Xinhua asked about reported meetings regarding

the two items over anti-dumping and anti-subsidy issues. "Recently we did hold a symposium with enterprises that import and export agricultural products," Gao said, noting it was to "understand the operation of foreign trade in agriculture". Though Gao denied it was connected to "Sino-US trade frictions", he said "related agricultural companies did indeed mention issues in the Sino-US agricultural product trade" with some producers "expressing concerns about the impact of imported agricultural products".

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Outturn exceeded expectations

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Surplus slims down

Official data released by China's General Administration of Customs may relieve some pressure generated by its vast trade surplus with the US. It reached record highs during Trump's first year in office — \$375.2 billion by US counting, or \$275.8 billion according to Chinese data. In January, China's trade surplus with the US dropped to \$21.9 billion, from \$25.6 billion in December. The figure is roughly equal to the surplus China posted with the US in January 2017.

China's booming imports

Still, analysts worry the persisting deficit will compound sensitive trade relations between the two countries. "The uncertainty surrounding Sino-US trade ties remains a key potential downside risk in the near term," said Betty Wang, senior China economist at ANZ bank. There is a large gulf between the two sides on how they view the massive deficit. "Generally Sino-US trade interests are relatively balanced," Gao said, after explaining the gap shrinks when considered on a value-added basis.



BEIJING: This photo shows a vending machine offering refrigerated fruits and vegetables for sale in Beijing.—AFP

Beyond the risks in the US-China trade relationship, official data yesterday showed China's imports soared and exports remained strong in January. Imports for the month surged 36.9 percent year-on-year, pointing to robust demand in the world's number two economy to start the year. China's continued economic strength flies in the face of the authorities' campaign to limit credit growth and reduce winter pollution by cutting industrial production. The wave of imports-buoyed by rising commodity prices-greatly surpassed analyst estimates of 10.6 percent growth for the period, according to Bloomberg News.

Analysts attributed part of the rise to the Chinese New Year holiday falling in February this year, as opposed to January last year. Even so, the "outturn exceeded expectations", wrote Julian Evans-Pritchard, China economist at Capital Economics. China's exports remained strong as well, posting 11.1 percent growth for the month, beating analyst expectations of 10.7 percent. The humming global economy continues to eat up China's products, giving its leaders more time to achieve their goal of transitioning the economy from one driven by exports and investment to a more stable model propelled by domestic consumption.—AFP

Despite Iran nuclear deal limbo, France to keep pushing business ties

PARIS: France will continue to encourage its firms to do business in Iran despite uncertainty surrounding a landmark 2015 nuclear deal, which has put the business environment in "limbo", a senior French finance official said yesterday. France and other European countries have been looking to increase trade with Iran since Paris, Washington and other world powers agreed to lift most economic sanctions on Iran

in exchange for limitations on Tehran's nuclear program.

But US President Donald Trump has never hidden his contempt for what he calls the "worst deal ever", and on Jan. 12 vowed to restore US sanctions unless France, Britain and Germany change the agreement to his liking. That has effectively put it on life support until mid-May. "We are encouraging companies to keep doing business in Iran," Joffrey Celestin-Urbain, director of bilateral relations at the finance ministry told a Euromoney Iran conference.

"We are in limbo on the international scene. Nobody knows what will happen after May. This is the uncertainty our French companies are facing and this is something you have to take for granted if you want to do business in Iran." France, which has had close business ties with Iran since before the fall of the Shah in 1979 and operates several large factories there including Renault and PSA plants, has sought to deepen trade ties since the sanctions were lifted in 2016.

French exports to Iran for the first 11 months of 2017 rose 120 percent to 1.29 billion euros and imports grew 80 percent to 2.16 billion euros, Celestin-Urbain said. He said the short-

term priority was to keep trade simple and complete a scheme this year to offer euro-denominated credits to Iranian buyers of French goods, a move that would keep bilateral trade outside the reach of U.S. sanctions.

"There is barely any private financing channels from France to Iran so it prompted us to step in. We are hoping to finalise soon," Celestin-Urbain said. Tehran has been hoping for swift reintegration into global trade after the deal was reached, but its failure to persuade Western banks to accept Iranian business has become a main choke point preventing its rehabilitation.

Reintegrating Iranian banks into the financial system would take time, and may require support from the Iranian government to help allay the cost to commercial banks of taking on added risk and performing additional checks. "Unfortunately Iran's banking system has yet to see full benefits under the deal," Iranian central bank chief Valiollah Seif said in a statement, read by his advisor Ahmad Azizi. "Iran is watching to see if politics helps or hinders business."—Reuters

Business



SINGAPORE: This photograph shows the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) Black Eagles aerobatic team performing aerial display during media preview for the Singapore Airshow. — AFP photos

Maritime patrol aircraft seen as key in Asia, but buyers elusive

Special-mission aircraft, a strategic asset

SINGAPORE: When Boeing's P-8A Poseidon first arrived at the Singapore Airshow two years ago, it caused a stir. Defense buyers around the region were intrigued by the new aircraft, which was touted as reliable, capable and absolutely necessary in a region abundant with naval tension, both above and below the water. In 2018, the need has grown. China has spent the last few years building up military installations around the South China Sea and its submarines are prowling farther afield, stoking Asian interest in planes that can sweep large swathes of ocean.

The number of offerings on the market has grown too, but the cost of such specialized aircraft has kept the purchases relatively small for now. "Special-mission aircraft are a strategic asset," said Avishai Izhakian, Israel Aerospace Industry's (IAI) deputy general manager for airborne systems and radars, explaining why sales of such planes have remained elusive. "As such, the procurement process is very lengthy."

Among those joining Boeing in trying to address the market are Saab's Swordfish Maritime Patrol Aircraft, based on the Bombardier Global 6000 business jet; the Kawasaki P-1; the Airbus C295 MPA and proposed maritime patrol variant of its A320neo; Leonardo's ATR 72MP; and IAI's ELI-3360 Maritime Patrol Aircraft, based on the Bombardier Global 5000 business jet. The Swordfish is not yet in production, however, and the Japanese Self-Defense Force is the sole customer for the P-1. India and Australia are so far the only Asia-region buyers of the \$175 million P-8.

No big sales of maritime patrol aircraft were announced at this week's Singapore Airshow, the biggest regional aerospace and defense event. Still, plane makers at the airshow said that Asia remained a promising market. "There is a requirement need out here in the Asian region for P-8s," Matt Carreon of Boeing said at a media briefing

on Tuesday. He cited the large volume of shipping traffic, the amount of piracy and the "current political climate" as reasons why maritime patrol would be important to Asian militaries.

Two P-8s were on display at the airshow, one flown by the US Navy - the aircraft's biggest customer by far, with 98 ordered and 64 delivered - and the other by the Royal Australian Air Force, which has ordered 12. Britain and Norway are the only other two announced buyers. Gene Cunningham, Boeing's vice president of global sales for defense, space and security, said the company was in advanced discussions with South Korea over a P-8 sale. There might be a decision by the end of 2018, he added.

TARGET MARKET

The moneymaking potential for sales in the Asia-Pacific region is clear. The U.S. State Department gave permission last year for a nearly \$1.5 billion P-8 sale to New Zealand, although no deal has been announced. Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and South Korea are among others in the region shopping for maritime patrol aircraft, several planemakers said. "If they are concerned about the proliferation of submarines, we are talking to them," said Robert Hewson, Saab's head of communications for Asia Pacific.

Hewson suggested the Swordfish would be as little as half the cost of the P-8 over its lifetime. IAI's Izhakian, speaking on the sidelines of the airshow, said the P-8 was better suited for large militaries with bigger budgets than for most potential Asian countries, leaving an opening for smaller aircraft with advanced sensors. "This is our niche, to provide a more affordable solution with more capability," he said.

Like Saab and IAI, Boeing designed its aircraft around the bones of a civilian plane, in this case the ubiquitous 737 passenger jet. Carreon said the aircraft's familiarity, plus the ability add in third-party or local systems, made it attractive to



SINGAPORE: Various military fighter jets and aircraft are exhibited during the Singapore Airshow.

even smaller customers. "They are shocked at the value they're getting," he said.

DEFENSE SPENDING RISING

Boeing is marketing its jet as a natural upgrade of the older, propeller-driven Lockheed P-3 Orion, which performs the same mission. Only one buyer, India, had not flown P-3s before purchasing P-8s. Kawasaki was displaying a model of its four-engine P-1 jet, which replaced Japanese P-3s, but Hideki Yamaoka, associate officer and project manager of the company's Advanced Aircraft Export Project, said it was generally "too high-end for the requirements" of Asian customers.

Unmanned drones are another option. Joseph

Song, vice president for international strategic development at General Atomics Aeronautical, which makes the MQ-9 Reaper, said he saw potential for growth in Asia. "I think the maritime mission is going to be as big as the land mission in the future, driven by Asian customers like Australia, India, Japan, Korea, and I think Singapore and other countries will certainly play a role," he said.

After a meeting of Southeast Asian defense ministers this week, Singapore defense minister Ng Eng Hen said the country was spending more all around, including on ways to keep an eye on the seas around the island city-state. "Defense spending on the whole, not only maritime surveillance, has gone up," he said. "That's a fact."—Reuters

Sports

James buzzer-beater lifts Cavaliers as Rockets win

Rockets overcome Heat 109-101

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James drained a buzzer-beating game-winner on Wednesday as the Cleveland Cavaliers set aside their troubles with a 140-138 overtime victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves. A Cavs team in free-fall got a desperately needed win thanks to “King” James. With a second remaining in overtime he swatted away a shot by Minnesota’s Jimmy Butler. He then seized an inbounds pass from Jeff Green, turned and fired over Butler for the desperately needed victory. “It was a great win for us,” said James, who threw both arms in the air in triumph when his game-winner fell-capping a triple-double performance of 37 points, 15 assists and 10 rebounds. “The way we’ve been playing we needed that from him tonight,” said Cavs coach Tyronn Lue. “He was very special.”

The Cavs are now just 7-13 since Christmas. Amid speculation the Cavs will make a significant move by Thursday’s trade deadline, the current team pulled out all the stops in avenging their 28-point loss to Minnesota on January 8. Seven Cavaliers players scored in double figures in a see-saw battle that saw 34 lead changes and 16 ties, evolving into a shootout in which the teams combined for an NBA record 40 three-pointers. Butler led the Timberwolves with 35 and Karl-Anthony Towns added 30. Andrew Wiggins’ jump shot with 1:25 left in overtime put Minnesota up 138-136.

James’s layup knotted the score at 138-138 with 24 seconds remaining. Butler drove to the basket against Cavs rookie Cedi Osman with a chance to win it, but James came from the weak side and rose to swat the shot away. JR Smith came up with the rebound to set the stage for the winning play. “Coach Lue called up a great play,” James said. “Jeff Green gave me a heck of a pass and I just trusted my instincts to let it go.” While one win won’t solve all the Cavs’ problems, Lue welcomed the sight of his players celebrating. “When you make a big shot like that

and the whole team is running the floor chest-bumping that’s a great sign,” Lue said. “That’s how we’ve got to be. I think we’ve got to enjoy the game more.”

Rockets 109, Heat 101

James Harden scored 41 points to lead Houston to its sixth straight victory, beating host Miami. Harden was 13-for-25 from the field, including 5-for-12 from behind the 3-point line. Chris Paul added 24 points for the Rockets, while Goran Dragic and Josh Richardson each scored 30 for the Heat. The teams exchanged leads in the final quarter, but Houston outscored Miami 26-21 for its 10th win in the past 11 games.

Spurs 129, Suns 81

LaMarcus Aldridge had 23 points and 13 rebounds, and Patty Mills added 18 points off the bench as visiting San Antonio blew out Phoenix. Danny Green had 17 points, and he and Mills hit five 3-pointers apiece for the Spurs, who broke a two-game losing streak. Mills played 17 minutes. Alex Len had 14 points, Josh Jackson had 13 and Dragan Bender had 12 for the Suns, who tied the worst margin of defeat in franchise history. Phoenix played without leading scorer Devin Booker (hip) for the second consecutive game.

Jazz 92, Grizzlies 88

Ricky Rubio had 29 points and eight rebounds, and Utah posted its season-best seventh consecutive victory by defeating host Memphis. Rodney Hood added 18 points as Utah completed a 4-0 road trip. Hood made all eight of his free-throw attempts as part of the Jazz’s 28-of-33 effort from the line. Utah’s Rudy Gobert collected 12 rebounds and scored eight points. Andrew Harrison scored a season-best 23 points to lead Memphis, which has lost five straight games and seven of its last eight. Marc



DETROIT: Blake Griffin #23 of the Detroit Pistons tries to get around Spencer Dinwiddie #8 of the Brooklyn Nets during the second half at Little Caesars Arena on February 7, 2018. — AFP

Gasol added 20 points.

Pistons 115, Nets 106

Blake Griffin poured in 25 points, Andre Drummond pulled down an NBA season-high 27 rebounds and Detroit stretched their winning streak to five games by downing visiting New Jersey. Griffin, who joined the Pistons for the second game of the streak, also had a team-best seven assists. Drummond’s rebounding total was two shy of his career high. He also contributed 17 points, three steals and three blocks. Allen Crabbe scored a career-high 34 points for the

Nets, who have lost eight of their past nine.

Pacers at Pelicans, ppd.

The scheduled game between Indiana and host New Orleans was postponed due to concerns about a wet floor inside the Smoothie King Center. A makeup date is to be determined. A leak in the building’s roof allowed rainwater to seep onto the court, and a delay began shortly before the scheduled tipoff. A delay of approximately 90 minutes ensued while officials of the two teams and the NBA office discussed options before the postponed eventually was announced.—Agencies

No NHL? No problem unheralded Olympians can still thrill

GANGNEUNG: No National Hockey League players? No problem. The replacements filling rosters at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, past and future NHLers, are still expected to produce a thrilling and dramatic tournament. Next week, the Pyeongchang Games will open the first men’s hockey Olympic event since 1994 without talent from the NHL, whose owners snubbed the Games in a money dispute.

Instead, largely unheralded players from European, collegiate and minor-league squads will have the unexpected opportunity of competing for Olympic gold. “A lot of teams feel they have a chance to compete for a medal and that alone will make it intense,” Canada general manager Sean Burke said. Defending champion Canada seeks a third consecutive gold medal and 10th title overall. The roster has players with a combined 5,544 NHL appearances,

led by 833 from forward Chris Kelly, a 2011 Stanley Cup champion with the Boston Bruins.

“This team proves the depth of Canadian hockey,” said Isabelle Charest, Canada’s chef de mission. “We will always be a force to be reckoned with on the ice.” There are 15 players with NHL experience on the US roster, with captain Brian Gionta, 39, just retiring after last season. “I like the hunger of our team,” US coach Tony Granato said. “We have guys who are really motivated, guys who will be realizing their dream. “There has been some talk of not having the NHL guys in (means) you don’t have highly skilled guys. That’s a bad representation. There are a lot of great players.”

‘Outstanding’ Russians

Two of them are former NHL stars Pavel Datsyuk and Ilya Kovalchuk, who make their fifth Olympic appearance as Olympic Athletes from Russia. Russian talent has not won Olympic gold since 1992, as the Unified Team after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They have been stripped of their flag and anthem after the 2014 Sochi doping scandal, but offer plenty of talent. There are 15 players from the Russia-based Kontinental Hockey League leader and champion SKA St. Petersburg, and eight more from second-best CSKA Moscow.

That familiarity is a big edge on rivals.

“On paper, the Russians have an outstanding team. They have the most experienced players. They have the best careers,” said Granato. “A lot of other teams have put together solid rosters as well. I think we can compete with any of them. We’re a team that should feel very confident.” US goaltender Ryan Zapsolski wondered about the chances of a small-scale repeat of 1980’s Miracle on Ice, when the United States stunned the Russian team. “It’s a great opportunity for our whole team to do something like that,” he said. “It’s going to be a challenge. Their roster is pretty dangerous for us.” The NHL is looking at 17-year-old Swedish defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, who could be the top pick in this year’s NHL Draft.

The Swedes took silver in 2014 and have five players from last year’s world champion squad. “It’s going to be incredibly fun,” said Sweden’s Joel Lundqvist, the twin brother of NHL star goalkeeper Henrik Lundqvist, who led Sweden to 2006 gold. Canadian women seek a fifth consecutive Olympic hockey crown, with arch-rival the United States expected to face them in the final. The Americans have won three world titles since a heartbreaking overtime loss in the Sochi final. “It always gets more intense with each game,” Canada captain Marie-Philip Poulin said. “Every time we play it’s like a gold medal game.”—AFP

Sports

Man United profit weighed down by higher wage bills

PSG, Man City's financial muscle 'good for the game'

LONDON: English soccer club Manchester United said its core quarterly earnings dipped because of rising wages for its players after its return to the Champions League. United, whose leading players include Paul Pogba and David de Gea, are currently second in the 20-team English Premier League and have reached the last 16 of the Champions League, Europe's elite club competition. "Our solid business model has allowed us to invest in the future of the club with the extension of Jose Mourinho's contract as manager and the acquisition of Alexis Sanchez," Executive Vice Chairman Ed Woodward said.

Manager Mourinho last month extended his contract until 2020, while Sanchez moved from Arsenal. The club's adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization for the three months to December 31 slipped to 67.8 million pounds (\$94.9 million) from 69 million pounds a year ago. Revenue increased 3.8 percent to 163.9 million pounds in the period—the second quarter of its 2017-18 financial year.

However, salary expenses for the quarter came in 9.4 percent higher at 69.9 million pounds on player salary uplifts due to participation in the Champions League. Controlled by the American Glazer family, United have won the English league title a record 20 times. Last season, United won the League Cup, as well as Europe's second-tier Europa League competition, securing a slot in the cash-rich Champions League for the current season.

Paris St Germain coach Unai Emery believes the soccer world should be grateful to the nouveau riche clubs like his and Manchester City for

shaking up the game and threatening the dominance of Spanish giants Real Madrid and Barcelona. La Liga president Javier Tebas has threatened to denounce the two teams, backed by the royal families of Qatar and Abu Dhabi respectively, to the European Union for their financing methods, comparing PSG's record-smashing 222 million euro (\$272 million) signing of Neymar Jr. to "peeing off the diving board". PSG also beat Barca and Madrid to the signature of French teenage sensation Kylian Mbappe, who joined the Paris club last year and will become the second most expensive player behind Neymar when he completes his move from AS Monaco in June for 180 million euros. "Madrid and Barcelona wanted Kylian, but PSG have the muscle to keep him at a French club and I think the transfer happened for sporting reasons and not financial ones, and that's something new in this new European order," Emery told Spanish newspaper Marca in an interview published yesterday.

"The (traditional) clubs see their kingdom under threat (from PSG) and (Manchester) City, who are a team with new-found financial capacity. I think this is good for football, that there are these new teams. Everyone should be grateful." PSG have an 11-point lead at the top of Ligue 1 and play faltering European and Spanish champions Real Madrid in a blockbuster Champions League encounter next week.

Emery thanked the club's owner Nasser Al-Khelaifi for allowing them to follow Barca and Real's example in breaking the bank to sign players who are among the world's best. "I al-



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Portuguese manager Jose Mourinho leaves the pitch at the end of the English Premier League football match between Manchester United in Manchester, north west England. — AFP

ways remember this with Real Madrid, the signing of Zinedine Zidane, Cristiano Ronaldo, James Rodriguez. And Barca did it, too, paying Rivaldo's release clause, and we are now seeing this finan-

cial capacity in France," Emery added. "I think that's good for this country, which should be grateful to the investment from Qatar for making sure the best players come here." — Agencies

Fekir sees Lyon into French Cup quarter-finals

PARIS: Nabil Fekir's penalty helped Lyon beat Montpellier 2-1 on Wednesday to reach the French Cup quarter-finals for the first time since 2012. Maxwell Cornet caught home goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte by surprise to give the visitors an early lead, only for Jonathan Ikone to quickly lash in an equalizer. But Fekir grabbed his 20th goal of the season with a 27th-minute spot-kick which proved to be the winner, leaving Montpellier coach Michel Der Zakarian fuming after Fekir was adjudged to have been fouled by Pedro Mendes. "The penalty? Often big teams are rewarded or favored," the Armenian said. "When Paris, Marseille, Monaco or Lyon cry, referees whistle penalties for them. We've had situations, (but) we haven't had a penalty since the beginning of the season." Lyon move into the last eight for the first time since winning the trophy for a fifth time six years ago, bouncing back from back-to-back league defeats that have seen them slip to fourth in Ligue 1. Coach Bruno Genesio made five

changes to the side that blew a two-goal lead to lose 3-2 to 10-man Monaco at the weekend, and it was Cornet who made the most of his opportunity by giving them a 13th-minute lead. The 21-year-old latched onto Bertrand Traore's pass, and with Lecomte anticipating a cross, he fired home inside the near post with a clever first-time effort to score his fourth goal of the season.

But Montpellier levelled just nine minutes later, as 19-year-old Paris Saint-Germain loanee Ikone met Paul Lasne's cutback to hammer into the top corner. It took Lyon less than five minutes to move back in front, though, as Mendes clumsily bundled over Fekir in the area, with the attacking midfielder picking himself up to slot in from the penalty spot. Lyon goalkeeper Anthony Lopes had to make a couple of good saves in the second half, while Memphis Depay spurned an excellent chance at the other end, but the away side held on with relative ease.

Earlier on Wednesday, Caen edged out Ligue 1's bottom club Metz on penalties after a 2-2 draw, while third-tier Chambly ended fourth-division outfit Granville's run and Lens beat top-flight side Troyes. Paris Saint-Germain continued their bid for a fourth straight title as Angel Di Maria scored a hat-trick in Tuesday's 4-1 win at Sochaux. Marseille are also through after Kostas Mitroglou and Lucas Ocampos both scored trebles in a 9-0 thumping of second-tier Bourg-en-Bresse. — AFP



MONTPELLIER: Montpellier's French forward Jonathan Ikone (left) vies with Lyon's French midfielder Lucas Tousart during the French Cup round of 8 football match Montpellier vs Lyon on February 7, 2018. — AFP

Sports

Sevilla outshine Leganes to reach King's Cup final

Coach Montellas gamble pays off

SEVILLE: Sevilla recovered from a humiliating loss to Eibar by booking their place in the King's Cup final for a second time in three seasons, beating Leganes 2-0 on Wednesday in a semi-final second leg to progress 2-1 on aggregate. Argentine midfielder Joaquin Correa struck the opening goal by slotting a loose ball into an empty net from close range in the 15th minute after Colombian forward Luis Muriel had burst into the area.

Sevilla coach Vincenzo Montella risked his reputation by playing a weakened team tomorrow against Eibar and his side were thrashed 5-1, but his gamble paid off as his side outlasted Leganes and Franco Vazquez smashed into the net from a tight angle in the 89th minute. "We knew how to stick together when we were down and how to be a team and thanks to this we're in the final. This will give us an important boost for

the remainder of the season," Montella told reporters. Leganes produced a huge shock by knocking out Real Madrid in the previous round and kept fighting but they struggled to create decent openings, managing only one shot at goalkeeper Sergio Rico, who had conceded an

embarrassing own goal in the first leg. "We are very proud of all the players as they gave everything and tried but we had an opponent in front of us who were better than us," Leganes coach Asier Garitano said. "When you give everything you

can't ask for anything else, we're going to see how we react to all of this and focus on our objective of remaining in the top flight next year." Triple holders Barcelona visited Valencia yesterday in the other semi-final with a 1-0 advantage from the first leg. The winners will play Sevilla in the final on April 21.— Reuters

“ Sevilla recover from humiliating loss to Eibar ”



SEVILLE: Leganes' Dutch forward Nordin Amrabat (right) vies with Sevilla's Spanish midfielder Jesus Navas during the Spanish 'Copa del Rey' (King's cup) second leg semi-final football match between Sevilla FC and Club Deportivo Leganes SAD at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium on February 7, 2018. — AFP

Juventus ready to pounce as Napoli face stiff Lazio test

MILAN: Serie A leaders Napoli face a tough test of their title hopes when they host bruised Lazio this weekend, while Juventus travel to Florence ready to pounce before they play Tottenham in the Champions League. Lazio - 14 points behind Napoli in third place—arrive in Naples desperately in need of three points after back-to-back defeats to AC Milan and Genoa. Failure could see Simone Inzaghi's side slip off the podium with Inter Milan and Roma—also licking their wounds after recent struggles—on alert as they host Bologna and bottom club Benevento respectively. Napoli are just one point ahead of Juventus but this weekend could see the six-time defending champions pull ahead.

Maurizio Sarri will be only too aware that Lazio inflicted just one of Juventus's two defeats this season, ending the Turin giants' two-year unbeaten home record last October. And Inzaghi will be keen to avenge a demoralizing 4-1 defeat the last time the two sides met in the Stadio Olimpico. Juventus are gaining momentum after a seven-goal demolition of Sassuolo—capped by a Gonzalo Higuain hat-trick—before Friday's game in Tuscany against an inconsistent Fiorentina in 11th place. "We mustn't be afraid of facing Juventus," said Fiorentina's Davide Astori, as his side look to build on last week's win in Bologna.

"If they feel we're worried, goodbye, we're dead," the Italian defender continued. "Gonzalo Higuain is the number one danger. He's ruthless, if you allow him just 30cm of space you're doomed." Massimiliano Allegri wants Juventus in shape before Tuesday's Champions League last 16 first leg clash in Turin with Spurs. And what better way than an eighth straight league win, despite an injury list that includes Blaise Matuidi, Paulo Dybala, Juan Cuadrado and Benedikt Howedes. "Right now, we have to think about the trip to Fiorentina first, and if we do well then I'm sure we will be in good shape to face Tottenham," warned Croatian forward Mario Mandzukic.

Inter Milan and Roma are both jostling for Champions League football despite mixed fortunes in recent games. Luciano Spalletti blamed his side's lack of character for going 10 games in all competitions without a win—a series that has seen them collect just six points from eight league games and score only five goals. But Inter captain Mauro Icardi should be back against Bologna after missing the draw with Crotone with a muscle injury. Roma have been showing signs of recovery since losing to Juventus before Christmas by winning their first game of the year last weekend at Verona. And Benevento coach Roberto De Zerbi has acknowledged his side, with just seven points from 23 games, will be up against it at the Stadio Olimpico despite new recruits including former Premier League players Sandro and Bacary Sagna.

"If we can get these sort of guys back to top condition they will be key players for us," said De Zerbi. "In terms of team spirit and understanding it isn't the ideal moment to take on a great side like Roma. "We will have to be brave.— AFP

'Fragile' Inter risk setting unwanted club record

BERNE: Faltering Inter Milan will set an unwanted record for the club's longest-ever winless run in the league if they fail to beat Bologna at home on Sunday. Inter topped Serie A at the start of December but a run of eight matches without a win—six draws and two defeats—has forced them to lower their sights and focus on qualifying for the Champions League place rather than battling for the title.

At the same time, leading pair Napoli and Juventus have each won their last seven games, leaving Inter 15 points adrift of top spot. Inter's last five league matches have ended in draws and in two of those, at Fiorentina and then again at SPAL, Inter conceded a 90th minute equalizer and were held 1-1. They also led at home to lowly Crotone last Saturday before allowing the visitors back into the game for yet another 1-1 draw.

"We're fragile, as soon as something goes wrong we lose confidence and show that we have a bit of a weak character," said coach Luciano Spalletti. "There's no other way, we need to be rational in how we do things and create a system of work that can bring confidence as we pursue our objectives. "Negative moments are contagious. We need to stay calm and be strong mentally to analyze things in the right way." "The guys work every day and they did good things in the week but they're not calm or confident enough to transfer that to the pitch." It is the fifth time Inter have gone eight matches without a win in Serie A, the most recent being last season when they employed three coaches and crawled home in seventh place. An injury to captain Mauro Icardi, their leading scorer with 18 Serie A goals, has not helped while forward Ivan Perisic has not scored since his hat-trick in the 5-0 win over Chievo on Dec 3, the last time Inter took three points. The club failed to land transfer target Javier Pastore from Paris St Germain last month, the only new arrivals being midfielder Rafinha on loan from Barcelona and defender Lisandro Lopez from Benfica.—Reuters

Italian Serie A table

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

Napoli	23	19	3	1	50	14	60
Juventus	23	19	2	2	59	15	59
Lazio	23	14	4	5	58	29	46
Inter Milan	23	12	9	2	38	18	45
Roma	23	13	5	5	33	17	44
Sampdoria	23	11	5	7	42	32	38
Atalanta	23	10	6	7	35	27	36
AC Milan	23	10	5	8	30	30	35
Udinese	23	10	3	10	36	32	33
Torino	23	7	12	4	33	29	33
Fiorentina	23	8	7	8	33	29	31
Bologna	23	8	3	12	28	35	27
Genoa	23	6	6	11	18	25	24
Cagliari	23	7	3	13	22	34	24
Chievo	23	5	7	11	21	40	22
Sassuolo	23	6	4	13	14	41	22
Crotone	23	5	5	13	18	40	20
SPAL	23	3	8	12	23	42	17
Verona	23	4	4	15	22	46	16
Benevento	23	2	1	20	13	51	7

Sports



The 'ski queens' Shiffrin and Vonn look to rule the slopes

Austrian Hirscher targets a first individual title

PYEONGCHANG: Mikaela Shiffrin and Lindsey Vonn head up a US women's alpine ski team aiming to dominate the Pyeongchang Olympics, while Austrian Marcel Hirscher targets a first individual title. Shiffrin is just 22 but already has 40 World Cup victories already to her name. She arrives in South Korea as reigning Olympic slalom champion, but can harbor hopes of a rare multi-medal haul because of a schedule she herself might have drawn up.

The opening giant slalom on Monday is followed by her slalom title defense, the super-G, downhill, combined and team events. A positive start in the giant slalom, and Shiffrin would be en route to multiple medals. "If I compete in four events, it's because I think I have shot to medal in four events," said the American, who is the three-time defending world slalom champion having first won aged 17 in 2013.

"Five might be biting off too much. Even though I did go on record saying I want five gold medals—I want the world and (to be) the king of the universe and all those things." She captured four races in seven days to begin 2018, and, importantly, claimed a first victory in a downhill, in Lake Louise in December. It is, however, Shiffrin's team-mate Vonn, a four-time overall World Cup champion, who leads the race (81) to overtake Swedish legend Ingemar Stenmark's record of 86 victories on the World Cup circuit.

Vonn won Olympic gold in the downhill and super-G bronze at the 2010 Games, but missed the 2014 Olympics through injury. As one of the most recognizable sportswomen in the world,

Vonn will bring more than a little stardust to the slopes. "I have so much confidence right now in my skiing, mentally, and my equipment," Vonn said. "Everything is coming together better than I could have hoped or planned for. "And now I go into Korea with a couple of wins under my belt and I'm just really looking forward to skiing the same way... full charge! No holding back. "I'm going to lay it all out on the table and see what happens."

Tragic season

The men's races kick off with the downhill, which will be particularly poignant following the on-piste deaths of popular Frenchman David Poisson and German teenager Max Burkhardt earlier this season. Norwegians Aksel Lund Svindal and Kjetil Jansrud shape as favorites on a slope said to be better suited to the more technically able downhillers. Austrian Matthias Mayer is the reigning speed champion, after stunning rivals in Sochi, and he forms part of a formidable quartet that also includes veteran Hannes Reichelt, Max Franz and Vincent Kriechmayr.

Switzerland's Beat Feuz is the current world champion, having triumphed on home snow in St Moritz last year, and is one of a dozen or so racers who could realistically push for a podium. Away from the downhill, all eyes will be on Hirscher, a record six-time winner of the overall World Cup crystal globe who looks well set to extend that after notching up seven victories this season: three in the slalom and four

asked us to dance together."

Her friend Choi Myo-seon added: "For a moment, it felt as if the wall between us had been melted away." As Pyongyang's national anthem blared across the venue, the North Korean flag was hoisted into the air, fluttering against the wind. The Pyeongchang Winter Games—which begin Friday—have triggered an apparent rapprochement on the divided peninsula, where tensions have been high over the nuclear-armed North's weapons ambitions.

The welcoming ceremony included performances by South and North Korean groups which drew contrasting reactions from the North's athletes. As the South's break dancing group B-Boy jovially jumped into the crowd of North Korean athletes, they remained stiff, clapping passively and giving occasional smiles. But the scene shifted when the North's band, dressed in a red and white uniform and each equipped with an instrument from the clarinet, trombone to the tambourine.

By the time the band was onto their third song, the athletes, standing in a line facing the cheerleaders, were dancing among themselves, later inviting South Korean volunteers to join them. The athletes, faces softening with excitement, appeared to be really having fun, said South Korean volunteers who later formed a circle with the North Koreans.— AFP



PYEONGCHANG: Volunteers prepare the slope during a moguls training session on the eve of the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games at the Phoenix Park in Pyeongchang yesterday. — AFP

in the giant slalom.

The 28-year-old has not enjoyed the same success on the Olympic stage, a slalom silver medal to his name from Sochi being his sole medal (behind now-retired compatriot Mario Matt). He finished a heart-breaking fourth twice in the giant slaloms in 2010 and 2014, and fifth in the Vancouver slalom. With 55 World Cup victories to his name, Hirscher looks in the form of

his life but knows he has strong competition in the shape of Norway's Henrik Kristoffersen and American Ted Ligety, who will be bidding for a third Olympic medal when he defends his giant slalom title. "It would be an amazing success, not a life-changing or career-changing success, but it would be really nice to have," Hirscher said of an Olympic gold. "What is 100 percent sure is that I go for it, that's the plan."— AFP

Dancing in the streets with North Korean athletes

GANGNEUNG: North and South Koreans danced in the streets yesterday as 22 North Korean athletes were welcomed to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The 22 are taking part in the Olympics following a thaw in inter-Korean relations and include figure skaters, ice hockey players, cross country and Alpine skiers.

The athletes, accompanied by other North Korean officials and band made up of around 80 North Korean cheerleaders attended a welcoming ceremony at the Olympic Village in Gangneung, the venue for all ice events at the Games. After a stiff and formal start, the mood eased when the dance band struck up a few tunes. "I was a little scared because they were just clapping and so serious in the beginning," said 15-year-old South Korean volunteer Jeon Moon-kyung. "But later they enthusiastically

North Korea at Winter Olympics: What we know

PYEONGCHANG: More than 500 North Koreans are converging on Pyeongchang in South Korea for the 2018 Olympics, in a historic cross-border exchange between two countries still technically at war. AFP looks at what we know so far about the visitors from the isolated, nuclear-armed state.

Kim's sister

The sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will visit South Korea for Friday's Pyeongchang Winter Olympics opening ceremony and meet with South Korean President Moon Jae-in for lunch tomorrow, according to the South Korean government. Yo Jong will become the first member of North Korea's ruling dynasty ever to visit the South. Analysts say she is being groomed by her brother to

become one of the country's top leaders. Yo Jong is a senior member of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party.

The others

More than 500 North Koreans are either in South Korea or on their way as part of a delegation officially led by North Korea's ceremonial head of state, Kim Yong Nam, who arrives Friday. He is technically the most senior North Korean official ever to travel to the South, but blood is thicker than water. Also in the delegation is Ri Son Gwon, who as head of the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country is responsible for inter-Korean affairs.

The athletes

There are 22 North Korean athletes in Pyeongchang. Twelve are women ice hockey players who have joined a unified Korean team. Three cross-country skiers, three alpine skiers, two short-track speed skaters and two pairs skaters, Ryom Tae Ok and Kim Ju Sik, complete the contingent. Only Ryom and Kim are seen as having any chance of winning a medal.—AFP

Sports



American and gay: Rippon, Kenworthy make history

First openly gay US men competing at Winter Olympics

PYEONGCHANG: Adam Rippon and Gus Kenworthy will have groundbreaking performances at Pyeongchang no matter how they perform, being the first openly gay US men competing at a Winter Olympics. British-born Kenworthy will try to improve upon the freestyle skiing slopestyle silver medal he won in 2014 at Sochi, while figure skater Rippon, the 2016 US men's champion, competes in his first Olympics. Both went public with their homosexuality in October 2015, and felt better for it.

"When I came out I was scared of losing sponsors and losing fan base," Kenworthy said. "It has been just the opposite." Rippon, 28, said he found it liberating to reveal his most personal secret, re-activating his passion for skating. "When I came out was when I was able to breathe," Rippon said. "When everyone knew, I didn't feel like I was hiding anything."

Rippon has attacked US Vice-President Mike Pence, the official US delegation leader, for allegedly backing gay conversion therapy—an accusation Pence denies. "I would absolutely not go out of my way to meet somebody who I felt has gone out of their way to not only show that they aren't a friend of a gay person but that they think that they're sick," Rippon told USA Today last month.



Pence slammed for backing gay conversion therapy

According to US media, Pence also denied a separate USA Today report yesterday saying he reached out for a conversation with Rippon in Pyeongchang and was rejected.

'More marketable now'

Kenworthy, 26, recalled his worries before coming out in a magazine article. "That was a scary time but it was something I wanted to do. I didn't sleep the night before the magazine came out," he said. Kenworthy recalled his fingers trembling as he sent the news to his Twitter followers. "I was so scared," he said.

"As soon as I posted it I had likes coming back. I had guys on my own team calling me, guys who called me 'faggot' were calling and apologizing. A world had lifted. "I was ready for the worst-case scenario. I saw the opposite impact right away." For one thing, his skiing improved with one less secret on his mind. "I don't know if it was because I was in the closet but it was ever-present in my mind and it took me out of my moment," Kenworthy said. "My abilities hadn't changed. And I was able to ski better." And the sponsors he feared might shun him instead embraced him.

"Products are looking for diversity. If I had known that it would have given me so much hope and saved me so much heartache," Kenworthy said. "I'm more marketable now that I'm out there. I'm glad they are embracing diversity." That's not to say his revelation was without haters and social media trolls. "There was hate

for sure and scorn online," Kenworthy said. "I still get messages every day." Rippon, twice a world junior champion, said on Twitter that being a gay athlete "is exactly like being a straight athlete. Lots of hard work, but usually done with better eyebrows". —AFP



GANGNEUNG: US skater Adam Rippon practices at Gangneung Ice Arena ahead of the team event of the men's figure skating before the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games in Gangneung. — AFP

Will 'Ice Prince' Hanyu stay cool under pressure?

GANGNEUNG: Japan's "Ice Prince" Yuzuru Hanyu must recover from serious injury and see off the challenge of American quad sensation Nathan Chen if he is to claim the first back-to-back Olympic men's figure skating titles in nearly 70 years. The floppy-haired superstar alarmed his legion of fans when he damaged ankle ligaments in November, and has since been training behind closed doors. All of Japan are willing on Hanyu, who is aiming to become the first man to secure back-to-back titles since American Dick Button in 1952.

The 23-year-old from Sendai is the polished product, combining innate technical ability with emotionally intelligent performances. But the right ankle injury he suffered in November has seen his standing as favorite for a repeat gold slip. He misses the team event, which kicks off action at the Gangneung Ice Arena today, after completing his preparations at a secret location.

"He will be 100 percent," promised coach Brian Orser, who also has two time ex-world champion Javier Fernandez under his wing. Fernandez, the veteran Spaniard, narrowly missed out on a first podium in Sochi and arrives at his swansong Games in form after claiming a sixth consecutive European title in Moscow. Chen, too, is flying. The Salt Lake

City-born son of Chinese immigrants has emerged as a serious contender to Hanyu's crown with his high-risk, quad-heavy routine.

From October to December Chen won three Grand Prix competitions, defeating Hanyu along the way, before an emphatic triumph in the US championships last month. "Eighteen years we've been looking at the rings and now we're here. It's really cool to have that happen," said the excited 18-year-old on Wednesday. Chen is the first skater in the history of the sport to line up five quads in a four-and-a-half-minute free dance routine. Others with claims to Hanyu's crown include his compatriot and world championship runner-up Shoma Uno, Canada's Patrick Chan and China's Jin Boyang.

Teenage tussle

The women's competition will be dominated by the tussle between Alina Zagitova and her fellow Russian teen Evgenia Medvedeva who, like Hanyu, saw her build-up marred by injury. The two-time world champion returned after a two-month lay-off at the European Championships in mid-January, but was edged out by her 15-year-old training partner Zagitova, who has enjoyed a sensational first season on the senior circuit.

Both are competing under a neutral flag as "Olympic athletes from Russia" (OAR) as their country serves a ban for state-sponsored doping. "At the Olympics we will be competing under the white flag, but we are still 'Athletes from Russia'. In our souls, we know," commented Zagitova. Others in contention are Italy's Caroline Kostner, who picked up bronze four years ago, and Canadians Kaetlyn Osmond and Gabrielle Daleman. — AFP

Anime, technology on offer; Japan promote 2020 Olympic Games

GANGNEUNG: Traditional paper cranes and some of the latest technology are on offer as Japan seeks to promote itself as the host of the next Olympic Games in 2020, with organizers hoping to inherit the enthusiasm and fervor of Pyeongchang 2018 hosts. Tokyo will host the summer games for the second time, following the tremendously successful 1964 Olympics, and organizers have brought a large delegation to Pyeongchang to learn how to host them successfully. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will also arrive in South Korea today to attend the opening ceremonies.

But yesterday it was all about introducing the fun side of Japan at the Tokyo 2020 Japan House, which opens to the public as the Games officially get going on Friday. On offer were cameras allowing visitors to imprint their face on paper used to make traditional folded cranes and others that create life-size avatars that then romp through typical Tokyo street scenes on a huge screen. "We will see an unprecedented run of three consecutive Olympics in Asia - Pyeongchang 2018, Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022 - a chance for all Asia to cooperate to make these fun," said Yukihiro Nunomura, Chief Operating Officer at Tokyo 2020. — Reuters

Sports



Doping hangs over Winter Olympics amid revelations

'Clean' Russian athletes to compete under a neutral flag

PARIS: The casual viewer of the Pyeongchang Olympics could be forgiven for wondering just how many athletes are doped after a raft of recent revelations in winter sports, despite "every effort" to crack down. Endurance sports such as cross-country skiing and biathlon have come under the most scrutiny, but—much like the Summer Olympics—no discipline has been completely unscathed in the build-up to the Games, which open today. Russian athletes deemed "clean" will compete under a neutral flag after their country was banned for a well-orchestrated drugs cheating system four years ago that allegedly had links all the way to the Kremlin.

Speaking on the eve of the Games in South Korea, World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) president Craig Reddie attempted to assuage the concerns of athletes who fear their rivals could dope their way to gold. There had been "very substantial" testing ahead of the Games, he said, adding: "I hope (that) will give the athletes comfort that they are in a fair and honest competition. "Every effort has been made to provide a proper playing field for the athletes and I hope, more than anything else, that at the end of the Games that is what it will be."

But recent Winter Games reveal grounds for skepticism. Ahead of the Olympics, British newspaper the Sunday Times and German broadcaster

ARD said they had been passed a database showing that more than 50 cross-country skiers set to compete in South Korea returned abnormal readings between 2001 and 2010. Following Salt Lake City in 2002, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) increased its scrutiny after Spain's Johann Muehlegg and four others were caught doping and stripped of their medals. At the 2006 Turin Games, doping products were discovered in a chalet used by a coach involved with Austria's cross-country skiing team. He fled the Games but was caught at a police roadblock.

Queues, protests as N Korean orchestra performs in South



Cocktail of steroids

However, doping at the Winter Olympics reached its nadir with the Russian plot four years ago in Sochi. The 2014 Games, hosted at enormous cost by Russia in the Black Sea resort, marked a new low with allegations of state-sponsored doping and the mass switching of test samples in favor of Russians. The former director of the Moscow anti-doping lab Grigory Rodchenkov—now in exile, fearing for his life and cooperating with investigators—admitted he fine-tuned a muscle-building cocktail of steroids to ensure Russian competitors won medals on home soil.

And they inevitably did, as Russia soared to the top of the medals table—a triumph for President Vladimir Putin. Russia has always denied ac-



GANTERSCHWIL: This photo shows a BEREK-KIT for drug and doping control which are scheduled to be used for the collection of urine samples at the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games. — AFP

cusations that it mounted a system of state-sponsored doping and has accused Rodchenkov of acting alone. WADA commissioned Canadian professor Richard McLaren to compile a report that focused suspicion on hundreds of athletes, with skating, ice hockey, biathlon and even curling on a long list of winter and summer Olympic sports under scrutiny.

Endurance athletes in Pyeongchang will be heavily tested for the endurance booster EPO,

and anti-doping officials fear that athletes have taken to using tiny, so-called "micro" doses to avoid detection. In response, testers will be taking ever more frequent samples. "EPO micro-doses disappear quickly so doses are taken almost every day in the hope of escaping testers," Xavier Bigard, of France's national anti-doping agency said. He also warned that the doses were likely to be taken out of competition to aid training and recuperation. — Agencies

IOC, WADA, CAS and the Russian doping story

PYEONGCHANG: In recent months the situation of claims and counter-claims with regard to Russian doping at the 2014 Sochi Olympics has become more confusing than ever, with a barrage of acronyms—IOC, WADA, CAS—and scores of athletes involved in a spiral of accusations, bans and appeals that are continuing even as the Pyeongchang Games get under way. Below is an explanation of the key players and issues in the Russian doping saga.

What is the IOC?

The International Olympic Committee is the global body in charge of the Summer and Winter Olympics. It has some 100 members who are elected by their peers. The IOC is funded through broadcast rights deals, sponsorship as well as licensing and marketing. It says it redistributes 92 percent of its revenues to its stakeholders which are the athletes, the international federations, national Olympic committees and the hosts of the Olympic Games.

What is CAS?

CAS is the Court of Arbitration for Sport, the highest tribunal for the resolution of sports-related disputes. It was set up by the IOC in 1984 to offer resolution of sports-related disputes with the use of arbitrators. While it says it is independent, senior International Olympic Committee (IOC) member John Coates, heads the International Council of Arbitration for Sport, (ICAS) a body set

up to ensure CAS's independence and which is responsible for the administration and financing of CAS.

What is WADA?

The World Anti-Doping Agency, set up by the IOC in 1999, is the global body that drafts and monitors the WADA Code, the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries. WADA is funded equally by the IOC and governments. Its key activities also include scientific research, education and development of anti-doping capacities. Its annual budget is \$30 million a year with WADA wanting to hike it to 45 million, saying the organization is underfunded.

Athletes appeal to CAS

The IOC has banned dozens of Russian athletes for doping rule violations during the Sochi Olympics, based on evidence from several investigations. Russia had finished top of the medals table at their home Games. It also banned them for life from the Olympics. But CAS upheld the appeal for 28 of them citing insufficient evidence. For 11 others evidence was enough to establish anti-doping rule violations but their lifetime Olympic ban was also commuted into a ban just from the Pyeongchang Games. More Russian athletes have appealed to CAS after they were excluded from the Games despite having no doping sanction. The IOC said they were banned because of evidence and suspicion of wrong-doing.

Who has the ultimate say?

The IOC reserves the right to include or exclude athletes from the Games. The IOC cannot sanction athletes for any anti-doping rule violation but it can refuse to invite them to its events as it has done with the Russian athletes despite them having been cleared by CAS.



PYEONGCHANG: World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) president Sir Craig Reddie gives a press conference ahead of the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games yesterday in Pyeongchang. — AFP

Why did IOC criticize CAS?

The IOC was stunned when CAS upheld the Russians' appeal, calling the decision surprising and disappointing and one which would have a negative impact on the fight against doping. While it has always insisted that CAS is the highest sports court IOC President Thomas Bach said change was necessary within CAS to allow it to "better manage the quality and the consistency of its jurisdiction". — Reuters



GANGNEUNG: Ryom Tae Ok (top) and Kim Ju Sik of North Korea practice at the Gangneung Ice Arena, ahead of the pairs figure skating competition of the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games. — AFP

Doping hangs over Olympics