

Friday Times

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Local

Violation of foreign workers' rights



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Can you imagine working in an arduous job in Kuwait such as construction, for example, under the hot sun in the summer or in the cold in winter, and not get your salary for months? You are forced to perform the work with the same efficiency without demanding your rights!

Foreign workers in private companies in Kuwait are facing recurring problems. Not all companies are alike, but the repetition of such issues means that there is no final solution and the government is not serious in putting an end to these problems, however small or limited. The failure to receive the agreed salary and other necessities is something that is offensive to all of us. I know that it may mean nothing to wealthy officials, but it means a lot to poor and hardworking workers who are away from their families, waiting for their meager salaries without a response.

The issue is not limited to a company or certain number of workers, and affects the reputation of the country and reflects a shameful image of violation of human rights. I believe that the fulfillment of salary contracts and labor rights are basic human rights, which must be monitored by various government bodies, because the practices of some companies destroy the work of the state and civil society institutions.

We are a country that relies on foreign workers for infrastructure and public services such as construction, cleaning and others. We must think about the rights of these poor people, which is indeed required under all moral and humanitarian principles. If we want to commission large development projects, we will undoubtedly need additional labor, so we must review the mechanisms of preserving their rights and ensuring stability in the country, fight marginal employment and combat iqama traders and law manipulators.

It is necessary to move quickly and take appropriate measures to address the problems of workers of all kinds to protect their rights, because labor strikes distort the reputation of the country and undermine its status, although Kuwait has a distinguished history in issuing labor legislation and establishing trade unions for more than five decades.

The Kuwait Human Rights Society (KHRS) has been monitoring the problems of workers who have been complaining of not receiving their salaries for up to 10 months, as well as not having their passports. Because of this, they have been violating the residency law and have accrued fines because the company didn't renew their residencies or paid their salaries. Paying these workers their dues may end the problem, but it won't be long until a similar issue arises.

I wonder if the company finally pays those workers, will they still be fined for violating the residency law? I think this issue needs a mutual decision by the ministry of social affairs and labor and the ministry of interior to exempt these workers from the fines, because it was out of their control. The government must take strict measures against companies that violate local and international laws relating to workers' rights, especially since Kuwait has ratified seven of the eight fundamental conventions in accordance with ILO standards that guarantee the rights of workers.

I believe that it's time to consider the issues of these workers, starting with giving them their rights and salaries, as well as respecting and not humiliating and exploiting them. Employers who don't pay their workers should be penalized, while the employment needs of violating companies should be reassessed.

Kuwait's favorite grammar mistake

Scribbler's Notebook

By Jamie Etheridge

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When a native English-speaker comes to Kuwait for the first time, there are many unusual things that will catch their eye. Shisha smoking, for instance, or the tradition of the diwaniya. But as a writer, one of the first things I noticed was the unique and distinctly local misuse of English words and grammar.

Take, for instance, the penchant for saloons vs salons.

In the US, a salon is somewhere you get your hair cut or nails painted.

A saloon is a place in the Wild West that sold beer and whiskey, and they often also had gambling and prostitutes. Imagine my first impression upon arriving to Kuwait and finding 'saloons' on every street corner!

The misspelling makes sense, however, if you understand basic Arabic. The word 'salon' would likely include a 'waw' and thus could easily be transliterated with an additional, albeit incorrect, O.

Another oft-used quirk of English grammar found in Kuwait is the misuse of the apostrophe.

It's very commonly - though wrongly - applied at the end of a plural. You see it in official government communications, in press statements, in emails, in letters to the editor, in the newspapers and online.

Apostrophes are used to indicate possession, not plurality.

For instance, Kuwait's weather is hot during winters and hotter during summers. Notice the apostrophe S at the end of Kuwait's? This is possession. Meaning that the weather 'belongs' to Kuwait.

Note: There is no apostrophe at the end of winters or summers. These are instances of plurals, not possessives. According to Strunk & White's famous Elements of Style, apostrophes are never used to indicate plurals. So one should never write: There are too many car's on the

streets. In this sentence, cars is plural, not possessive.

There are other uses for apostrophes and places where you shouldn't use one at all. But the main problem here seems to be with adding them to plurals, so let's stick with that.

Here's another simple example:

Correct: How many CEOs are billionaires?

Incorrect: How many CEO's are billionaires?

Don't get me wrong. The misuse of apostrophes is a global phenomena. There's even a society in the UK for the 'protection of the apostrophe' and guerrilla grammarians who stealthily correct billboards all across the UK (the home of English!) painting over apostrophes in signs and hoardings.

I'm no grammar police and I frequently misspell words or throw a comma where it shouldn't be. But the apostrophe misuse can be devastating. Did she mean students or student's?

Another thing I've noticed is that people tend to throw in the apostrophe whenever they have proper nouns or things they think - but aren't sure - may be capitalized.

Capitalization is another area of great confusion. Arabic doesn't have capitals and so those whose first language is Arabic are often confused or unsure about which English words are capitalized and why.

Suffice it to say, that is a full discussion in itself. In the meantime, I would love to get to the root of the apostrophe case. Why do so many people in Kuwait use it wrong and use it wrongly in exactly the same way?

I'm guessing that somewhere in history, a non-native English teacher learned the incorrect way and has through the generations passed that mistake down to other English teachers, who in turn passed it on to their students.

No doubt, children in school are still being taught the incorrect usage of the apostrophe and once taught at the fundamental level, it's almost impossible to unlearn.

What do you think? Do you know how to correctly use an apostrophe? And what are the most common grammar/spelling/language mistakes you see in Kuwait? Send us an email to local@kuwaittimes.com.

Why homework is hated

IN MY VIEW

By Unaisa Qidwai

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Homework is compulsory. But why do people hate homework? Why do they call it a waste of time? Mostly, homework is based on the work students learn in class, so that teachers can determine whether the students have understood the lesson or not. However, teachers nowadays give homework because they have to, not because it is needed. Pupils and teachers both find homework to be a chore. Teachers have to assess the homework, and it may even take up to half an hour to correct just one student's book.

People - old or young - want to do what they like all the time - whether it is spending time with family, reading a book, going out with friends, watching a movie or any other activity. This is difficult when they still have to work after school. If we were to think deeply, we would realize that if a student did not understand an aspect of a lesson, they would ask the teacher. Unfortunately, everyone is forced to complete their homework assignments, even if they understand the subject.

Moreover, every teacher assigns homework, and high school students have many teachers daily! Not only that, but

students have to meet the deadlines. Although schools have tried to solve this problem by setting homework schedules, there has been little effect.

Matt Miller is a senior trainer and consultant with Red Education with over 20 years of experience in the industry. Last year, at the TeachTechPlay conference in April, he was debating this very topic. On a visit to Ivanhoe Grammar School, he said that he was "horrified" by the amount of homework he saw dished out. "I can't think of very many jobs where I would put in a full eight-hour day, come home, and then be expected to do four and five more hours of work. In a lot of jobs, that's going to lead to burnout; that's going to lead to unhealthy lifestyles ... but that's what we're asking our kids to do."

Umair is a young boy aged 11. "Although I am in grade 6, I get a lot of homework. Every few days, I get projects to complete, even for subjects that require only reading. The load of homework is way too much. I barely get time for extracurricular activities. Isn't the time we spend in school enough? Do we have to spend time at home doing schoolwork? These moments will never come back. Young children should spend their youth having fun and not doing homework," he argues.

If homework is removed from the curriculum, students, parents and teachers will have more time for their families and hobbies. And perhaps those who are not good at studying may turn out to be skillful at something else.

Kuwait Times



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Getting to Know Kuwait

Welcome to

By Faten Omar

Abu Fatira is located in Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorate, bordered by Funaites to the north, Egaila in the south, Mubarak Al-Kabeer from the east and Abu Al-Hasania on the west. Although Abu Fatira is a quiet area with a good location, many residents complain about a lack of services.

Um Khaled, a 41-year-old resident of Abu Fatira for the past five years, told Kuwait Times that the area suffers from a lack of schools and hospitals, while the number of residents is growing. "We also want some malls and entertainment places.

The Gate mall is the only shopping center near us. We can hardly spend the weekend here with our kids," she said.

Ahmed Al-Azmi, 58, said residents of Abu Fatira suffer from a lack of supervision by government agencies responsible for carrying out infrastructure work and follow-up and maintenance of some secondary roads and main roads damaged by the use of trucks and heavy cranes, which affects all inhabitants. He noted that Abu Fatira has suffered delays in the completion of infrastructure work including roads and buildings, power transmission projects and ground structures.

In terms of tree cover in the area,

Mohammad Jaafar, 36, said the area is good and many people can find nice apartments at reasonable rents, but the government must work hard on making the area beautiful, as the trees are not watered for long periods. He complained palm trees remain dry all summer. He demanded the EPA to look into this issue, and urged residents to look after their area. "Trees are an important component of the area's overall green infrastructure. You as property owners are responsible for maintaining and caring for your street's vegetation, including watering," he added.

Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Abu Fatira



Local

Pushy salesmen

and deceitful sales practices

By Nawara Fattahova

Savvy consumers may be increasingly aware of internet scams and phony salesman but even the savviest will find it hard to push back against a pushy salesman who shows up at your door.

One of the more common 'sales schemes' now in Kuwait is home service where salesmen bring products to your home to 'test' and then buy. Some of the products being sold in Kuwait in this way are vacuum cleaners, knife sets and cookware among other household items.

Distributing companies often employ cold calling to target would-be customers. Salesmen make appointments to come to the customer's home to give a demonstration. These aren't necessarily scams but the pushy sales tactics of the salesmen often make customers feel pressured. The promoter doesn't give customers time to think and quickly convinces them to sign a contract and a debt approval form. The customer is later unable to change their mind, even if they don't use the product.

According to the consumer protection department of the ministry of commerce, if an electronic product has been removed from its carton, the customer does not have the right to return it.

"If the product was taken out of its box, it can be exchanged with a new one only in case of a manufacturing defect. This should be done within 14 days - after this period, it should be repaired by the company free of charge, unless it cannot be fixed," an inspector told Kuwait Times.

If the customer signs a contract for paying in installments, then they are committed to this contract. "The consumer protection department won't be able to help the customer, as they are bonded to a legal contract. If the customer paid cash, the same conditions mentioned above will apply.

But if the customer feels cheated, they can always visit our department and we will discuss the problem with them," added the inspector.

Attorney Mohammed Al-Otaibi explained that the debt approval form is illegal and has no power. "If the customer signed a contract for paying in installments, then they are bound to the contract. However, the customer can still withdraw from the contract, but will lose the down payment and whatever amount they have already paid," he explained. "The customer can complain or file a case if signing the form resulted in a travel ban, arrest order, or other sanctions for nonpayment. Regarding the salesperson entering the house, this is legal since the customer allowed them to enter," Otaibi added.

There are other kinds of sales where the salesmen are pushy and may be selling something fake. "Most timeshare companies are scamming people with fake promises and illegal contracts. People have lost thousands of dinars in such deals and didn't get anything that was included in the contract. Even I once went to a presentation promoting timeshares, and they tried to make me sign a contract. When I insisted to take the contract home to read it carefully and completely, they refused. So I left," he said.

The inspector at the consumer protection department spoke about other things that a customer may not know when they purchase various goods. "Most goods can be refunded or exchanged even if the store mentions that it's not possible, for instance during sale periods. But there is a special return window for some items, such as evening dresses, which can only be returned on the same day. Undergarments can't be exchanged for any reason," he noted.

“Regarding the salesperson entering the house, this is legal since the customer allowed them to enter.”



Book fair

in Avenues' corridors: An open invitation for reading



KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature (NCCAL) have always been taking care of spreading knowledge and literature in the country through organizing cultural event, exhibitions and festivals. Most important of these events are book fairs that are directly associated with people from the public putting words and knowledge in their hands. In an effort to spread cultural awareness in the society, the publishing and distribution department in the NCCAL held yesterday an exhibition for the council's latest publications at the Avenues Mall, including other publications for authors from Kuwait as part of the activities of the 24th session of the cultural festival. — KUNA



Local

80% of Kuwaiti manpower work in public sector: Report

Private sector has over 60 percent of total manpower

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwaitis continue to prefer working in the public sector as evident in recent statistics which indicate that 80.2 percent of local manpower work in the public sector. Meanwhile, the private sector continues to have more than half of the total manpower, as its capacity rose to 60.7 percent from 60.4 percent in 2016. Kuwaitis' share of manpower in the private sector is 4.3 percent of the total number of workers.

Missions abroad

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said that his ministry sent expats abroad on 670 official duties to 89 countries. In his response to a

question by MP Dr Waleed Al-Tabatabae about the topic, saying that these missions are related to the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, adding that those missions were to attend meetings and visit projects for follow up and evaluation.

Meters' shortage

The Ministry of Electricity and Water faces crises in supplying the required number of 200-ampere meters, which are necessary for new residential projects. Home owners complained that it is no longer easy to get that type of meters which are obtained through the ministry only. Informed sources said the ministry signed contracts with a company to import 2,000 meters of 200-ampere.



Future schools system could be canceled

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Education Ministry has not made a final decision yet whether to cancel the future schools' system, Assistant Undersecretary for General Education Fatima Al-

Kandari announced yesterday. However, the ministry is likely to end this experiment after a recent study revealed that only one out of six public schools where it was implemented is actually adhering to this concept. "Consultations were made and a proposal will be submitted to Education and Higher Education Minister Dr Hamed Al-Azmi to decide whether to continue with it or not," Kandari said. The future schools system was launched 13 years ago as part of an educational overhaul plan. It is based on group teaching methods in which one teacher teaches several subjects instead of having a separate teacher for each subject.

Surgeons complete first successful liver transplant

KUWAIT: Surgeons at Kuwait's Health Ministry have successfully carried out their first-ever liver transplant operation for a Kuwaiti whose liver functions suffered chronic failure, the minister said on Wednesday. A joint Kuwaiti-British team

of surgeons carried out the operation at the government-run Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital, Health Minister Sheikh Bassel Al-Sabah said in a statement. The transplanted liver was taken from a brain-dead donor after approvals were granted from the family of the deceased.

The milestone comes amid a cooperation agreement between the ministry and the Liver Transplant Unit of Kings College Hospital in London, said the minister. The agreement is a platform for the supervised formation of a permanent liver transplant program in Kuwait, which will train local surgeons on how to carry out the task, he revealed. King's Liver Transplant Unit runs the largest transplantation program in Europe, carrying out more than 200 procedures a year. — KUNA

4th Ring Road Regaie traffic light shut-down

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The traffic light at the Fourth Ring Road next to Al-Regaie will be put out of service as of today morning, the Interior Ministry's Traffic General Department announced yesterday. It called upon motorists to take caution while driving along the highway opposite to Al-Regaie.

Fires

Firefighters from three different fire stations battled a blaze reported in a third-floor apartment. Firemen evacuated 60 residents from the building before they extinguished the fire. One resident suffered smoke inhalation and was taken to hospital. Meanwhile, firefighters put out a blaze reported in a five-storey building, and no injuries were reported.



KUWAIT: Smoke can be seen coming out from an apartment in a Farwaniya building.

Sudden rise in temperature expected today

KUWAIT: Kuwait is currently affected by sudden rise in temperature and strong activity of southern wind that will create dusty weather today, meteorologist Yasser Al-Bloushi said yesterday. The weather yesterday was moderate and the wind speed was between six and 20 kilometers per hour. The maximum temperatures was 22 C degrees, while the minimum was 5 C degrees. — KUNA



Local

MP Hayef threatens defense minister over women service

Anti-corruption body starts probe of helicopters deal

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Islamist opposition MP Mohammad Hayef warned he would grill Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah if he starts to admit women in military service as has been announced earlier this week.

Hayef said that the identity of the Kuwaiti society is a "red line" and stressed he will not accept plans to "Westernize" the society. He said that the place of women is not in the army or other military services. He said that women have been allowed into some military services in the interior ministry at certain departments only in order to search women or organize places visited by women. Sheikh Nasser said earlier this week that he was open to accept women in the defense ministry like in the interior ministry and the national guard. But the minister insisted that there has been no official discussion on the issue in the assembly committees.

Head of the assembly interior and defense committee MP Askar Al-Enezi said a few days ago that the panel did not discuss the issue and

expressed his rejection of any plan like that. Islamist and conservative lawmakers strongly oppose the mixing of the sexes especially in the military.

In the meantime, the Public Anti-Corruption Authority said yesterday that it has begun a probe into a military agreement with France to purchase about 30 Caracal helicopters for over \$1 billion. MPs have raised the issue recently and the prime minister ordered that the whole deal be referred to the authority, the public prosecution and the Audit Bureau for an investigation. The issue was raised after press reports said that a Kuwaiti middleman in the deal demanded commissions worth over 60 million euros from the manufacturing company which refused.



MP Mohammad Hayef

Kuwait backs UN efforts to resolve Libyan crisis

NEW YORK: Kuwait, in its first meeting in the Security Council to discuss the situation in Libya, reiterated its full and firm commitment to support all United Nations efforts aimed at ending the crisis in Libya, especially the plan of action for that country.

This came in a speech delivered by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during a session of the UN Security Council to discuss the situation in Libya on Wednesday.

He said that a plan of action for Libya aims to amend the Libyan political agreement, organize a national conference, prepare for the elections and provide humanitarian assistance to the needy during this critical phase in the history of Libya.

Otaibi expressed appreciation for the strenuous efforts made by the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman as part of his visit to Libya last week to consolidate the democratic transition process in Libya. Four months after the Secretary-General presented the plan of action, encouraging signs and important steps began to emerge in the framework of activating the Libyan political process, he added, hailing at the same time efforts of Special Representative for Libya Ghassan Salama, which reflected the progress that has taken place recently.



NEW YORK: The Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a session of the UN Security Council to discuss the situation in Libya. — KUNA

He said that Kuwait will spare no effort to ensure the unity of the Council in deterring everything that would disturb the unity of the Libyan people towards the achievement of security and moral stability under the political agreement, expressing belief that this is the best way towards achieving a comprehensive political solution led by a Libyan leadership.

In this context, he stressed the need for all Libyans to comply with the provisions of paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2259 (2015), which affirms the rejection of all attempts aimed at undermining the political process led by Libya and facilitated by the United Nations. Otaibi welcomed the important role played by the Presidential Council of the National Reconciliation Government as well as the role of all Libyan leaders in promoting national reconciliation. — KUNA

Guyana Embassy celebrates seventh anniversary

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Guyana celebrated the seventh anniversary of its launching in Kuwait yesterday at its premises in West Mishref. The reception also included a short presentation about Guyana addressed by the spouse of the ambassador Dr Maryann Beebe- Ally.

Professor Dr Shamir Ally, the Ambassador of Guyana to Kuwait, said that the embassy is celebrating its seventh anniversary in the same location. "I am pleased to welcome you all here today and I appreciate your atten-

dance. I hope that you will have a chance to visit our beautiful country that has very rich nature. Guyana is using hydropower as it is known as the land of many waters, and the United Arab Emirates announced a \$50 million Caribbean development aid that also includes Guyana for hydropower," he noted during the celebration.

"I would like to thank the Kuwait government and His Highness the Amir for his support, and the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister who visited Guyana previously and encouraged the Guyana embassy to be established here. I am working on increasing the trade exchange between the two countries, as I want to secure any Kuwaiti investments in Guyana. Within one year, we issued 13 visas for Kuwaitis who went to visit Guyana, and I hope soon the number will increase," he told the Kuwait Times.

The Republic of Guyana is a tropic country situated in South America. It is the only country in South America where English is the official language. The name Guyana means 'Land of Many Waters' in the native Amerindian language. Guyana's population consists of six main ethnic groups: Amerindians, Africans, Indians, Europeans, Portuguese, and Chinese.



KUWAIT: Dr Shamir Ally, the Ambassador of Guyana to Kuwait (second from left) is joined by others as they cut the cake during the ceremony. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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India test-fires Agni missile amid threats

Detained Saudi cleric Al-Awda hospitalized

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AKTOBE: A handout picture provided by the Kazakh emergency situations ministry shows a burning bus on a road in the region around the city of Aktobe. Fifty-two people were killed yesterday when the Russia-bound bus they were travelling in caught fire in Kazakhstan. —AFP

52 killed in Kazakhstan bus fire

One of the deadliest accidents in five years

ASTANA: Fifty-two people were killed yesterday when the Russia-bound bus they were travelling in caught fire in Kazakhstan, the central Asian nation's emergency services ministry said. "On January 18 at 10:30 am, a bus caught fire ... 55 passengers and two drivers were on board. Five people who managed to escape are receiving medical assistance. The rest died on the spot," the ministry said, without elaborating on the cause of the blaze.

All those who died are believed to be Uzbek nationals, an interior ministry official told Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency. Kazakh media reported they were migrant workers travelling to Russia. Uzbekistan's emergency services ministry said it had opened a hotline. The vehicle was registered in Kazakhstan, emergency services ministry official Ruslan Imankulov told AFP.

He said the fire spread very quickly.

Short circuit blamed

Regional emergency service officials initially blamed the fire on a short circuit and said the bus was overloaded, Interfax-Kazakhstan news agency reported. Ministry representative Imankulov did not confirm this however, telling AFP: "It's too early to talk about the reasons for the fire." Panic broke out on board the bus, hindering evacuation, while survivors managed to climb through a door and window,



Survivors climbed through a door and window

Kazakh news site BNews reported. Two of the survivors suffered burns to their hands, emergency services officials told AFP, while others suffered minor injuries.

The Kazakh emergency services ministry said it was travelling from the southern Kazakh town of Shymkent to the Russian city of Samara on the Volga river, a distance of almost 1,900 kilometers (1,200 miles). Video broadcasts by Russian and Kazakh media showed black smoke and flames billowing from the vehicle which had veered across a flat stretch of road carving through a snowy steppe. A pho-

tograph taken later showed the vehicle completely charred. The ministry said the vehicle was a Hungarian-made Ikarus. These buses are still widely used in ex-Soviet nations, even though they are often decades old.

The accident is one of the deadliest in the last five years, with the worst toll in Afghanistan in 2016 when two buses collided with an oil tanker, killing at least 73 people. The tragedy, which struck in the area around the city of Aktobe, highlights the high accident rate for passenger transport in the region. In October last year, a Kazakh-registered bus with Uzbek passengers was hit by a train in Russia after breaking down on the tracks, killing 19 aboard the bus. In 2015, 16 people, including three children, died in Kazakhstan when a minibus collided with a van on April 20, 2015.—AFP

IS poses threat to Iraq a month after 'liberation'

IS fighters take refuge in the vast desert

MOSUL: Barely a month after Baghdad declared victory over the Islamic State group, the jihadists could still recapture areas of Iraq, especially near the border with Syria, experts and officials say. Ali Al-Bayati, a commander of the Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary units which fought alongside Iraqi security forces in a grueling battle against the group, said the Nimrud region of northern Iraq could "fall at any time because security there is fragile".

Last July, the authorities in Baghdad announced with much fanfare the "liberation" of nearby Mosul, Iraq's second city. IS fighters who fled their former stronghold and took refuge to the west, in the vast desert towards the

Syrian border, have since launched attacks on security forces and civilians, Bayati said. Hiding out in valleys and gullies as well as trenches dug before their ouster from Mosul, the jihadists have built up stockpiles of arms, fuel, water and food. More than 4,000 jihadists have been arrested in Nineveh province since Mosul's capture, according to police chief General Wathiq Al-Hamdani.

But Aed al-Louayzi of Nineveh's provincial council said several civilians have been robbed or killed inside the city itself, some by assailants disguised as soldiers. He says the attacks have been the work of IS members from the areas of Tal Afar

and Hatra, both towns also recaptured last year from the jihadists. Hisham Al-Hashemi, a specialist on jihadist movements, said Iraq's announcement in December of military victory "simply means that the (black) IS flag is no longer flying" over government buildings. To counter the threat of an IS resurgence, "several operations have been carried out south of Mosul" with US-led coalition support to seize arms, said coalition spokesman Colonel Ryan Dillon.



Jihadists build up stockpiles of weapons

Active 'sleepers'

Louazi said that "geographically, the territory has been retaken... but not all the jihadists there have been arrested". "We are in the same security situation as that which led to the fall of Mosul" back

in 2014, which came after the extremists had seized control of some areas, he said. To try to avoid past mistakes, Dillon said, "the coalition has trained Iraqi security forces to address the transition and future threats. We knew there would be a transition from fighting to policing." The Hashed, which is patrolling the border with war-torn Syria, says it faces infiltration attempts by jihadists on a daily basis. Although IS is also on the verge of overall military defeat in Syria, it surprised observers last week by announcing a comeback in the country's northwest. In the Hawiyah area of northern Iraq, at least three



RAQA: Syrians ride a motorbike past damaged buildings in the northern Syrian city of Raqa after a huge military operation led on the ground by Kurdish fighters and in the air by US warplanes defeated jihadists from the Islamic State group but also left the city completely disfigured. — AFP

civilians and a Hashed fighter have been killed this month, according to security sources. They said around 60 jihadists have also died in fighting around Hawiyah, one of the last IS urban strongholds retaken by Iraqi forces. On Monday, a twin suicide bombing in Baghdad cost more than 30 lives, prompting Prime Minister Haider

Al-Abadi to order security forces to "eliminate IS sleeper cells" and protect civilians. But Hashemi said the threat is more immediate. "This concept of sleeper cells is a mistake. They are not sleepers, they are active," he said. "They are capable of mounting attacks and even of taking control of zones." —AFP

Detained Saudi cleric Al-Awda hospitalized

DUBAI: Prominent Saudi cleric Sheikh Salman Al-Awda has been hospitalized after almost five months in solitary confinement, human rights group Amnesty International said yesterday, citing family members. Awda was among more than 20 people arrested in a crackdown on dissent in early September and has been held without charge ever since. He has reportedly been allowed just one telephone call, in October.

Amnesty said he was admitted to hospital in the western city of Jeddah on Tuesday and his family were denied any contact with him. "The hospitalization of Sheikh Salman Al-Awda, aside from being deeply worrying and traumatic for his family, highlights his shameful treatment by

the Saudi authorities," Amnesty's Middle East campaigns director, Samah Hadid, said. "The authorities must ensure that he receives all necessary medical treatment, that he is allowed to communicate with his family and a lawyer, and above all that he is released from detention," she said.

Amnesty said Awda was arrested a few hours after posting a tweet welcoming reports of a possible reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and neighboring Qatar. Saudi Arabia and its allies cut off all diplomatic and economic ties with the emirate in June accusing it of links to Islamic extremists, a charge Doha has categorically denied. According to his family, the Saudi authorities had demanded that Awda and other prominent figures publicly back the kingdom in the dispute but he refused. Saudi activists have said Awda's brother Khaled has also been detained for disclosing the cleric's arrest. —AFP

Israel commandos kill a Palestinian gunman

JENIN: Israeli police killed a Palestinian gunman and captured another in a clash in the occupied West Bank yesterday, saying they were part of a cell responsible for an ambush in which a Jewish settler was shot dead. Two police commandos were wounded in the raid in the city of Jenin, a spokesman said. Such flare-ups have been rare in the West Bank, where Palestinian security forces last year resumed cooperation with Israel despite the stalling of negotiations on statehood. An official of the Palestinian health ministry said it had been informed by the Israelis the dead man was Ahmed Jarrar, a Hamas gunman and the son of a senior commander of the Islamist group, Naser Jarrar, who was killed by Israeli forces in 2002.

But the official said the Palestinian side had not seen the body, and his family could not confirm the death. Three other Palestinians were wounded, the official said. Witnesses said the Israeli forces had bulldozed at least one building as they closed in on their targets, and that it was possible another gunman was buried under the rubble. Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said the commandos had gone after the suspected killers of Rabbi Raziel Shevah, a resident of a

settlement outpost near the Palestinian town of Nablus who was shot in his car in a drive-by attack on Jan 9.

"We will reach anybody who will try to harm Israel's citizens and we will bring them to justice," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, commenting on the operation, said during a visit to India. Tensions in the region have risen since US President Donald Trump's announcement on Dec 6 recognizing disputed Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and at least 18 Palestinians and one Israeli have been killed since. "The cell in Jenin is not the first and will not be the last," Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said in a statement. "The criminal role of (Palestinian) security coordination (with Israel) will not succeed in preventing the resistance from confronting Trump's decision and protecting Jerusalem."

Hamas opposes coexistence with Israel. Trump's reversal of decades of US policy has enraged Palestinians, who want to create an independent state including Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Israel captured those areas in the 1967 Middle East War and annexed East Jerusalem in a move not recognized internationally. It says the entire city is its eternal, indivisible capital. US-led peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians broke down in 2014. A bid by Trump's administration to restart them has shown no real signs of progress. Vice President Mike Pence is due to visit the region from Jan 20 to 23. —Reuters

International

Violent storms batter the Netherlands

Severe winter gales bring travel chaos

THE HAGUE: Severe winter gales battered the Netherlands yesterday forcing Amsterdam airport to cancel all flights, bringing Dutch trains to a halt and toppling trucks as winds reached 140 kilometers (86 miles) an hour. "Due to severe weather conditions: all air traffic has been suspended until further notice," Schiphol airport, one of Europe's busiest flight hubs, said in a tweet. Air traffic will "gradually restart around 12:00 pm (1100 GMT)", the airport said. The cancellations notice came shortly after the Dutch national weather service upped its warning to the highest level.

The westerly storms blowing off the North Sea meant "a code red is in force with very heavy gusts of up to 140 kilometers an hour expected in some areas," the national weather service (KNMI) said. "Such heavy gusts bring with them a danger to people and traffic," it added, warning of the risks of falling trees and urging people not to venture go into the seas, with many Dutch surfers often seen seeking out the highest waves.

NS, the Dutch national railway company announced that "due to the storm all trains are halted until further notice" apart from a small local service in northern Groningen and

southern Limburg. It was already grappling with "a large number of breakdowns" which meant even after the storm it could take some time for normal service to be restored, NS added in a statement. The high winds were expected to decrease by later in the afternoon, but Dutch officials had already closed to all traffic several more exposed roads and bridges crossing different dykes.

All fishing boats were also sheltering in ports, while ferries to the far-flung northern Texel island were stopped. Despite battering down the hatches for the storm's arrival since Wednesday, there were still difficulties on the roads. Many streets were blocked by falling trees and branches, while the national traffic service (VID) warned of major problems on the motorways due to blown over trucks. By late morning the VID had counted 25 large lorries which had been toppled by the gale-force winds, leading to huge congestion on six of the country's main road arteries. Southern Rotterdam, Europe's busiest cargo port, was now "virtually unreachable from the north due to problems" on three of the main motorways into the city, the VID added.—AFP



UTRECHT: Passengers wait as displays indicate that trains do not depart at Utrecht Central Station in Utrecht, The Netherlands yesterday. —AFP

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International

Snowstorm and deep freeze leaves four dead in US South

Winter storm coats roads with ice

ATLANTA: A winter storm that caused at least four deaths in the US South brought record low temperatures on Wednesday to parts of the region, where it coated roads with ice, snapped power lines and prompted public school closures. Frigid temperatures and snow were also forecast for the mid-Atlantic region and much of New England through yesterday. The National Weather Service (NWS) issued winter weather advisories and storm warnings for northern Georgia into Virginia and from Massachusetts to Maine.

In Austin, Texas, a vehicle plunged more than 30 feet off a frozen overpass late on Tuesday, killing a man in his 40s, Austin-Travis County Emergency Medical Service said on

its Twitter feed. An 82-year-old woman who suffered from dementia was found dead on Wednesday behind her Houston-area home, likely the victim of exposure to the cold, the Harris County Sheriff's Office said.

In Georgia, two people were fatally struck by a car that slid on an ice patch near Macon, local media said. At Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, the nation's busiest with a typical volume of 2,700 arrivals and departures a

day, about 470 flights had been canceled by Wednesday afternoon, according to tracking service Flightaware.com. The sheriff's office in Oconee County, Georgia, east of Atlanta, tried humor to keep people off icy roads. "I know you need cigarettes, beer and wine to get you through having your kids at home. Can you just do without for a day? Stay home," the office said on its Facebook page.

Frosty south

Wednesday's storm was not the first this winter to bring a blast of frosty weather to the South, where parts of Florida and the Louisiana coast saw their first measurable snowfall in decades. Winter storm warnings and winter

A vehicle plunges over 30 feet off a frozen overpass



weather advisories were posted across portions of the Carolinas and southern Virginia. The governors of Georgia, North Carolina and Louisiana declared states of emergency because of severe conditions that made roads treacherous. In North Carolina, where more than 2,000 snow-plow personnel worked to clear roads, the state Highway Patrol reported nearly 1,600 traffic accidents during the first 12 hours of Wednesday. More than 9 inches of snow has fallen in Durham,



RALEIGH: Dozens of people gather to sled at Dorothea Dix Park during a snow storm in Raleigh, North Carolina. — AFP

North Carolina, since Monday, with 6 inches or more measured at various locations across southern Virginia, the NWS said. North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper warned at a news briefing that cold temperatures Wednesday night would make travel conditions even more hazardous. "The snow is pretty but don't be fooled," Cooper said. In Atlanta, many people appeared to be heeding Georgia Governor Nathan Deal's plea to

stay off the roads as only a few cars crept along on typically packed highways. A few people bundled up to go out in temperatures that were well below freezing in a city known for its sweltering summer heat. "We don't dare try to get the car out of the garage," said teacher Kimberly Hodges, 40, who was walking her puppy in the city's East Atlanta Village neighborhood. "It's a mess out here." — Reuters

Tug-of-war in Venezuela over rebels' bodies

CARACAS: Dozens of Venezuelan soldiers ringed a Caracas morgue Wednesday where the body of dissident former police officer Oscar Perez and six others were taken after being gunned down in a bloody police operation. Perez, Venezuela's most wanted man, had gone on social media while the operation was under way Tuesday to say he and his group wanted to surrender but were under unrelenting sniper fire. That has raised questions about the government's account that the seven were killed after opening fire on police who had come to arrest them. "There was an extrajudicial execution and we want to prove it," said Winston Flores, an opposition lawmaker who heads a congressional committee formed to investigate the deaths.

Flores, a physician by training, told reporters outside the Bello Monte morgue

that authorities refuse to release the bodies or provide autopsy reports. "The response we received was that they are not going to hand over the bodies because they are (being held) at the order of a military court," said Flores. The morgue itself was cordoned off by five rings of armed soldiers carrying anti-riot shields. The blonde and telegenic Perez, 36, was known to Venezuelans as a movie actor and member of an elite police unit. But he gained national notoriety in June at the height of anti-government protests against President Nicolas Maduro.

As street protests raged, Perez and accomplices flew a stolen police helicopter over Caracas, dropping grenades on the Supreme Court and opening fire on the Interior Ministry in what Maduro denounced as a coup. Since then Perez has taunted the government from hiding, popping up on social media and at opposition rallies. In his final video post during the assault, a bloodied Perez called on Venezuelans "not to lose heart. Fight, take to the streets, it is time we are free." On Tuesday, his wife Dana Vivas demanded on Twitter that the government allow his family to identify his body, and insisted it not be cremated. And his mother echoed her, firmly. — AFP

UK, Italy bolster troop presence in Africa's Sahel

LONDON: Britain is set to send helicopters to bolster a key French counter-terrorism operation in Mali in a package of measures to be agreed at a summit near London yesterday. The commitment will come as Prime Minister Theresa May meets French President Emmanuel Macron at an army base near the British capital, with immigration and global aid also on their agenda.

In a separate move, Italy's parliament on Wednesday also approved a ramped up military presence in Niger by agreeing to send an initial 120 troops with 350 more to follow as Rome looks to stem migration and people-trafficking of African migrants. European powers are desperate to stem the flow of African migrants crossing the Mediterranean and are spooked by increased militant jihadism across the Sahel region. May is due to announce the deployment of three RAF Chinook helicopters to provide logistic support to French troops. The mission is focused on Mali, where the UN, EU and African Union all have military operations countering terrorism and illegal trade in people, drugs, weapons and wildlife. "Today's summit will underline that we remain committed to defend-

ing our people and upholding our values as liberal democracies in the face of any threat, whether at home or abroad," May said in a statement ahead of the summit. May will also discuss with the French president their joint crackdown on online extremism "to ensure that the internet cannot be used as a safe space for terrorists and criminals," according to the government spokesman.

Britain is also expected to allocate £50 million (56 million euros, \$69 million) of additional aid for those affected by epidemics, natural disasters and conflict across west Africa. Earlier this week five Sahel countries—Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Chad and Burkina Faso—launched their second anti-jihadist operation in the troubled region, after talks in Paris with their partner France. The force has been operating, with heavy French backing, to re-establish control in lawless frontier regions in the Sahel, south of the Sahara, where terror groups have been able to flourish, particularly in the "tri border" area where Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso converge.

Italy's focus is on Niger, a key transit country for tens of thousands of people arriving in Libya which is itself the launchpad for many Europe-bound African migrants, from where they attempt dangerous sea crossings to Europe. Last year, some 115,000 landed in Italy, a figure down 32 percent year on year, taking arrivals since 2014 to around 600,000. "This is a training mission in response to a request from Niger, not a combat mission," said Defense Minister Roberta Pinotti, speaking about the plan lawmakers approved on Wednesday. — AFP

International

CIA agent's arrest follows US spying debacle in China

The third arrest in one year

WASHINGTON: The third arrest in one year of a US official suspected of helping Chinese spies has bared the tense battle between the two superpowers' intelligence agencies. The arrest late Monday by US authorities of former Central Intelligence Agency agent Jerry Chun Shing Lee was reportedly linked to Beijing's brutal dismantling five years ago of the CIA's network of undercover operatives and informants inside China.

That followed the June 2017 arrest of a former State Department security officer, reportedly also an ex-CIA official, Kevin Malloy, on allegations that he handed over US secrets to Chinese agents for \$25,000. Three

months before that, a China-based US diplomat, Candace Claiborne, was charged for taking tens of thousands of dollars in cash and gifts from Chinese intelligence.

According to The New York Times, US counter-intelligence has been working overtime since at least 2012 to uncover a possible pro-Beijing mole within the ranks of America's espionage services.

The Times reported last year that starting in 2010, to the end of 2012, the Chinese uncovered and killed "at least a dozen" sources the CIA had inside China and imprisoned six or more others.

One of them was shot in front of his colleagues to send a message, the Times reported. That debacle severely damaged the US government's ability to collect secret information on its Asian rival. It also implied that the huge Chinese Ministry of State Security and the espionage arms of the People's Liberation Army had been able to penetrate US intelligence.



Tense battle between two superpowers' intelligence agencies

Chinese mole?

Lee, 53, was arrested late Monday after he landed in New York. A naturalized US citizen who had lived for the past several years in Hong Kong, he served in the US Army in the 1980s and spent 13 years from 1994 at the CIA,

where he had top secret clearance. The charge against him was limited to one count of unlawful retention of national defense information. But the details of an investigation spanning at least five years suggested much more.

The indictment said that in 2012 FBI agents had secretly examined Lee's luggage while he was travelling. They found two notebooks jammed with classified information including the identities of CIA covert agents and assets, notes from their meetings, locations of covert facilities, and phone numbers. The charge did not say whether this information, which would have been



WASHINGTON: A view of Capitol Hill January in Washington, DC. — AFP

extremely valuable to Beijing, had been provided to the Chinese, or whether they had gained access to it otherwise. Citing intelligence community sources, the Times reported that Lee was one of those eyed for years by investigators as a possible mole.

Growing espionage threat

US officials would not comment on the newest case, but the government has been increasingly worried about Beijing's spying. "The United States faces a large and growing threat

to its national security from Chinese intelligence collection operations," said a November 2016 report of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission. In 2008 two US defense officials were arrested for passing secret materials to a US citizen originally from Taiwan, Tai Shen Kuo, who officials said was working for Chinese intelligence. In 2010 agents discovered that an incoming 28-year-old CIA recruit, fluent Mandarin speaker Glenn Shriver, was already on the payroll of the Ministry of State Security, and had been tasked to infiltrate the agency. — AFP

US nuke review calls for development of low-yield weapons

WASHINGTON: The US military wants to overhaul its atomic arsenal and develop a new type of low-yield weapon that experts worry could lead to greater proliferation and heighten the risk of nuclear war. The proposed changes to the nuclear weapons program, outlined in a draft version of the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review, mark a significant break from the vision for America's nuclear future under Barack Obama, who during a famous speech in Prague in 2009 called for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Arguing today's security environment is vastly more complex than in 2010 - the last time the Pentagon published a nuclear review - the draft document states that the US needs to realign its nuclear policy with a "realistic assessment" of the threats it now faces, including from North Korea, Russia and China. "Global threat conditions have worsened markedly" since the 2010 nuclear policy review, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis wrote in the document's introduction, a leaked version of which was published by the Huffington Post.

"The United States now faces a more diverse and advanced nuclear-threat environment than ever before." The new strategy calls for a continuation of the nuclear modernization program ordered by Obama, but notable

changes include a call for the increased development of low-yield nuclear weapons. These devices, also known as "tactical" nukes, are still extremely powerful and can pack as much destructive punch as the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II.

Policymakers worry that regular, large-yield weapons are essentially too big to ever be detonated, as their use would likely result in large-scale retaliation from an adversary and wipe too much of humanity off the map. The Pentagon argues that by having more, smaller nukes it will counter adversaries' "mistaken confidence" that the United States would not respond to another country using its own low-yield bomb. "Expanding flexible US nuclear options now, to include low-yield options, is important for the preservation of credible deterrence against regional aggression," the document states. The proposed policy says the Defense Department and the National Nuclear Security Administration will develop a low-yield submarine-launched ballistic missile for deployment.

Such a capability would ensure "a prompt response option that is able to penetrate adversary defenses." Barry Blechman, co-founder of the Stimson Center, a nonpartisan anti-nuclear proliferation think tank in Washington, warned that the review contains major steps backward from the goals of previous administrations - to reduce the risk of nuclear war and prevent nuclear weapons spreading to additional nations. "Nuclear ideologues maintain that the US has to match the adversary's arsenal, weapon for weapon, yield for yield, to deter nuclear use," Blechman said in a statement to AFP. "There is no empirical basis for this view, but it is widely held among civilians being appointed to positions in the" administration of President Donald Trump. — AFP

Police comb filthy California home where starving siblings found

PERRIS: Investigators on Wednesday conducted an exhaustive search of the foul-smelling, filthy tract home east of Los Angeles where a California couple are accused of keeping captive and nearly starving their 13 minor and adult children, police said. David Turpin, 57, and Louise Turpin, 49, were set to go before a judge in Riverside County on Thursday on charges of torture and child endangerment in the case, which came to light over the weekend after their 17-year-old daughter escaped through a window and alerted police.

"We have investigators on scene, combing through everything they can find for additional evidence," Riverside Sheriff's Deputy Mike Vasquez said by telephone. "They're trying to gather more information

that may assist them in providing a full description of what was going on there. "The whole house is a crime scene," he added.

Officers raided the house in the small city of Perris, about 70 miles east of Los Angeles, on Sunday after the 17-year-old, whose name was not released, called the 911 emergency number on a cellphone. She was so small and emaciated, officers at first thought she was about 10 years old. On Wednesday afternoon, several investigators, some wearing black gloves, went in and out of the house, frequently carrying boxes and bags of material they placed in waiting vehicles. Inside the garage, floor-to-ceiling shelves that appeared to be stacked with DVDs could be seen. — Reuters

International

South Africa's Ramaphosa piles pressure on president

President Zuma under pressure to resign

JOHANNESBURG: South African Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa yesterday called on prosecutors to act urgently in pursuit of a firm owned by friends of scandal-plagued President Jacob Zuma, as pressure mounted on him to step down. Ramaphosa succeeded Zuma as head of the ruling African National Congress last month, making him likely to replace Zuma as the country's next president in 2019 - or even earlier, if Zuma resigns. In recent days he has gone on the offensive against companies controlled by the Gupta family, businessmen friends of Zuma accused of unduly using political connections to win work with the state.

"We want to deal with the rot. It is unacceptable, totally unacceptable, that companies owned by the nation and set up to benefit the people have been hijacked," Ramaphosa said at a meeting of business leaders and cabinet ministers. The rand currency has rallied around 16 percent since Ramaphosa's ANC leadership victory as investors bet he will crack down on corruption and imple-

ment policy reforms. The Gupta family and Zuma have denied wrongdoing and say they are victims of a politically-motivated witchhunt. A spokesman for Zuma and a lawyer for the Gupta family did not respond to requests for comment yesterday.

South Africa's state prosecutor said on Wednesday it would serve a court order on McKinsey relating to a 1.6



Anti-graft push puts global firms under scrutiny

billion-rand (\$130 million) contract with state utility Eskom that the global consultancy worked on with Trillian, a local firm that was then controlled by Gupta family associates. "We welcome the actions they are beginning to take and we encourage them to act with urgency," Ramaphosa said. International firms being probed by South African

authorities over work done with the Guptas include German software maker SAP, auditor KPMG and consultancy McKinsey.

Eskom in turmoil

McKinsey has apologized for working with Trillian at Eskom in 2016 without a contract and is offering to pay back its fee, but denies doing anything illegal. Parliament is carrying out a wide-ranging investigation into Eskom, Africa's biggest power utility. The firm's financial turmoil and allegations of mismanagement and corruption are a major concern for investors and ratings agencies. Finance Minister Malusi Gigaba said yesterday the Treasury could not afford to bail out Eskom.

Separately, South Africa's companies registry office is pursuing criminal complaints against SAP, KPMG and McKinsey in relation to Gupta-controlled companies. SAP, KPMG and McKinsey all said on Wednesday they were happy to cooperate with any police enquiries. KPMG cleared out its South African leadership in September last year after an internal



JOHANNESBURG: Deputy President of South Africa, and newly elected African National Congress (ANC) President, Cyril Ramaphosa (center) reacts while flanked by Minister of Finance Malusi Gigaba (left) and Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Jeff Radebe during the Pre-World Economic Forum (WEF) Breakfast yesterday. — AFP

investigation found work done for Gupta family firms "fell considerably short of KPMG's standards". KPMG denied it had done anything illegal. SAP, Europe's biggest technology

company, said last year it had "let down South Africa" by paying \$7.7 million in commissions to Gupta-related companies between December 2014 and November 2016. — Reuters

Cape Town water ration to be slashed as drought bites

CAPE TOWN: Cape Town will next month slash its individual daily water consumption limit by 40 percent to 50 litres, the mayor said yesterday, as the city battles its worst drought in a century. Mayor Patricia de Lille has warned that if rains do not materialize and drastic consumption reductions are not achieved the normal water supply will be shut off. Instead residents will have to queue at standpipes for daily water rations of 25 litres. "We have reached a point of no return... We can no longer ask people to stop wasting water - we must force them," De Lille said as she announced a raft of tough new measures to fend-off the so-called "Day Zero" standpipe scenario, currently forecast for April 21.

A typical shower uses 15 litres per minute while a standard toilet consumes 15 litres per flush, according to WaterWise, a

South African water usage awareness campaign. One of the measures, which the council will vote on Friday, is a punitive tariff for the city's thirstiest consumers. "Despite our urging for months, 60 percent of Capetonians are callously using more than 87 litres per day," said De Lille, referring to the current daily water consumption limit. "At this point, we must assume that they will not change their behavior," she said.

The city has rolled out a string of projects in recent months to increase its water reserves, including efforts to drill into aquifers and the construction of desalination plants. But De Lille said those measures "will simply not be enough" and that the chance of reaching "Day Zero" was now "very likely". "The crisis has reached a new severity necessitating a series of new emergency measures," she said. The city, which attracts millions of tourists every year, has enforced strict waste controls including splash bans at municipal pools and hauling wasteful homeowners before the courts. Water consumption in Cape Town has nearly halved since early 2016, but has remained stubbornly high at around 620 million liters per day - 120 million liters above the city's target. "Day Zero" has crept forward by a week since the beginning of the year. — AFP

A year of Trump fails to improve US-Russia ties

MOSCOW: Donald Trump said during his election campaign he wanted to improve relations between the US and Vladimir Putin's Russia. But a year on from his inauguration, ties between Washington and Moscow are at Cold War lows. As American investigators continue to probe Russian involvement in Trump's shock 2016 election victory over Hillary Clinton, Moscow talks of the US president as a hostage to internal political struggles who is unable to improve ties.

"Russian-American relations deserve better, our people deserve better," the Russian Foreign Ministry's spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said. "We were always in favor of developing bilateral relations regardless what president came to power in the US," she said. Tensions between Washington and Moscow have continued to grow despite the promises of the then Republican candidate and his early nomination of Rex Tillerson - who has personal ties to Putin - to Secretary of State. The Cold War rivals have clashed over crises in Ukraine, Syria and Iran, with reciprocal expulsions of diplomats last year.

Following Russia's 2014 annexation of the Crimean peninsula and the war between Kiev and Kremlin-backed rebels, the US has imposed ever

stricter sanctions on Moscow. In his diplomatic roundup of 2017 on Monday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov repeatedly attacked the US on virtually all topics, suggesting a disappointment in the new president. "Unfortunately the actions of the current administration are in line of Obama's, despite the line of president Trump during his election campaign. In certain areas, they are even more assertive," Lavrov said at an annual press conference.

'Anti-Russian hysteria'

After accusing the Obama administration of deliberately destroying Russian-American relations, Moscow had "big hopes" the election of Trump would improve the relationship, according to Russian analyst Ivan Kurilla. "There is an impression that the Russian elite continues to believe the Trump administration does not want full confrontation with Russia and a hope for improvement remains," Kurilla, of the European University in Saint Petersburg, told AFP. "If not this year, then the next," he added.

Vladimir Vassilyev, a researcher at the Institute for US and Canadian Studies in Moscow, said there is a "paradox" in the current state of ties between the two countries. "The leaders of the two countries have called for an improvement of relations, but they are only degrading," Vassilyev told AFP. While Moscow waits for ties to improve, a year of Trump in the White House has been marked by a series of new sanctions over alleged interference in the US presidential election, on top of its actions in Ukraine. — AFP

India test-fires intercontinental missile amid 'perceived threats'

Three women killed as India, Pakistan trade fire

NEW DELHI: India tested its longest-range intercontinental missile yesterday, the defense ministry said, part of efforts to build a nuclear deterrent against neighboring Pakistan and China. The 5,000-km range (3,107-mile) Agni missile was tested from an island in India's eastern coast in the Bay of Bengal, the ministry said on its official Twitter account. It said the launch was "a major boost to the defense capabilities" of India. The Agni-V is an advanced version of the indigenously built Agni, or Fire, series, part of a program that started in the 1980s. It has been tested previously before. New Delhi says it faces a twin threat from both bitter foe Pakistan, which is developing a nuclear and missile program of its own, as well as China. A long-running dispute over the Himalayan border with China has flared in recent years.



'Major boost to India defense capabilities'

India, Pakistan trade fire

In another development, three female civilians and a soldier have been killed in cross-border firing by the Indian and Pakistani armies, officials said yesterday, taking the death toll along the frontier to 13 this week. Police in India

said they had evacuated villagers living near the firing, which had killed an Indian soldier and a woman civilian in the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir state late Wednesday. Meanwhile a statement from the Pakistan army said Indian soldiers had fired on villages across the border in Sialkot in Punjab province late on Wednesday, killing two women. Both sides regularly trade fire along the border, parts of which are disputed, and civilian casualties are common.

But this week has been particularly bloody. On Monday Pakistan said four of its soldiers

were killed during Indian firing along the heavily militarized Line of Control (LoC), the disputed section of the border in southern Kashmir. Also Monday, Indian soldiers killed five suspected militants who they said were trying to infiltrate from

Pakistan-administered Kashmir. India frequently accuses Pakistan of sending fighters across the LoC to launch attacks on its soldiers in Kashmir, which has been divided between the two nuclear-armed neighbors since partition in 1947. Islamabad denies the allegations.—Agencies



JODHPUR: Indian Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman gestures on board a Sukhoi 30 at Indian Air Force Base in Jodhpur. —AFP

Indian boy shot dead in crossfire

MATHURA: An eight-year-old boy was shot and killed in police crossfire as he played outside with friends in northern India, an officer said yesterday. It is not clear who fired the bullet that hit Madhav Bharadwaj, who was with his grandfather when he was shot late Wednesday as police apparently took on suspects in a robbery.

Rajesh Kumar Sonker, superintendent of police in the Mathura district of Uttar Pradesh state where the incident took place, told AFP an investigation was underway. "We are probing the case and will soon get to know how the child got hit and killed," he said. Villagers, however, told local media that only police were shooting. "Three policemen came to the village and asked the (suspects) to gather at the terrace of a nearby temple for a talk. But suddenly the cops began firing," the boy's grandfather told the Times of India newspaper.

"My poor grandson was playing nearby and got hit. I froze for a moment. I was unable to understand what had happened." The boy's cousin told AFP the three police officers fled the scene after he was hit. "They ran away. We have one of the policemen's jackets and their motorcycle with us," said Manmohan Bharadwaj. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offered his



MATHURA: Indian police and residents talk in the village where Madhav Bharadwaj, 8, was shot and killed in police crossfire in Mathura yesterday. —AFP

condolences to the family and compensation of 500,000 rupees (\$7,835). The state has one of the highest crime rates in India, an issue that Adityanath pledged to tackle with tough policing when he was named chief minister last March.

Rights groups have however accused him of abusing his power after he reportedly said at a rally that criminals would "either be sent to jail or killed in police encounters". Police in Uttar Pradesh and

other Indian states have been accused of faking "encounters" with suspects to carry out extrajudicial killings. "Even if the law and order situation is grave, the state cannot resort to such mechanism," India's National Human Rights Commission said in a statement responding to Adityanath's comments. Uttar Pradesh police have killed 33 people since Adityanath came to power, according to figures in the Indian Express newspaper.—AFP

Myanmar makes record drug bust

YANGON: Myanmar has seized 30 million meth pills along with more than two tons of "ice" and heroin in a record bust, the government said yesterday, as drugs pour from labs in lawless border regions. The operation in a remote part of northern Myanmar came after the Tuesday arrests of four suspected traffickers who led police to a house in Shan State's Kutkai township where the haul was discovered, the Ministry of Home Affairs said in a statement. "It's the biggest drug seizure with the largest amount (by value and quantity) in (our) history," a senior police officer from the anti-drug department told AFP on the condition of anonymity as the investigation was ongoing.

In addition to the meth tablets, the authorities found 502 kilograms of heroin and 1,750 kilograms of crystal methamphetamine, or ice, bringing the total estimated value to \$54 million, or one-fifth of the amount of narcotics seized in the country in all of 2017. A picture of the packages of drugs stacked high on a table was published by the ministry. Myanmar is the second largest opium producer in the world after Afghanistan, but levels of poppy cultivation have declined as demand for methamphetamine surges, leading to numerous multi-million dollar busts. Its lawless border areas are the hub for Asia's meth producers, who pump out "yaba" meth pills and ice, the more addictive crystallized version, across Southeast Asia. Drug trafficking has been increasing around the country, especially in war-torn northern Shan State as many ethnic armed groups use it to buy weapons.—AFP

International

Nearly 7 decades of tensions between North, South Korea

Two Koreas agree to march under a single flag

SEOUL: North and South Korea have agreed to march together under a single flag at the Winter Olympics opening ceremony, in the latest sign that the crisis on the peninsula may be easing. The decision comes after months of tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear and missile program, the latest phase in the turmoil that has persisted since the start of the Korean War. Here is a timeline of relations between the two Koreas, who remain technically at war:



A latest sign that the crisis may be easing

War but no peace

In June 1950 fighting broke out between the communist North and capitalist South, sparking a brutal war that killed between two and four million people.

Beijing backed Pyongyang in the three-year conflict, while Washington threw its support behind the South-alliances that have largely endured. The Koreas have been locked in a dangerous dance ever since that conflict ended in 1953 with an armistice rather than a formal peace treaty, leaving them technically at war.

Sending in the assassins

Pyongyang has tested the fragile ceasefire

with numerous attacks. The secretive nation sent a team of 31 commandos to Seoul in a botched attempt to assassinate then-President Park Chung-Hee in 1968. All but two were killed. In the "axe murder incident" of 1976, North Korean soldiers attacked a work party trying to chop down a tree inside the Demilitarized Zone, leaving two US army officers dead. Pyongyang launched perhaps its most

audacious assassination attempt in Myanmar in 1983, when a bomb exploded in a Yangon mausoleum during a visit by South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan. He survived, but 21 people, including some government ministers, were killed. In 1987, a bomb on a Ko-

rean Air flight exploded over the Andaman Sea, killing all 115 people on board. Seoul accused Pyongyang, which denied involvement.

Direct confrontation

The North's founding leader Kim Il-Sung died in 1994, but under his son Kim Jong-Il, it continued to prod its southern neighbor. In 1996, a North Korean submarine on a spying mission ran aground off the eastern South Ko-



SEONGNAM: Israeli-made Spike missiles on parade during a ceremony marking the 65th anniversary of the founding of South Korea's Armed Forces at an air base in Seongnam, south of Seoul. —AFP

rean port of Gangneung, sparking 45-day manhunt that ended with 24 crew members and infiltrators killed.

A clash between South Korean and North Korean naval ships in 1999 left around 50 of the North's soldiers dead. In March 2010, Seoul accused Pyongyang of torpedoing

one of its warships, killing 46 sailors. Pyongyang denied the charge. November that year saw North Korea launch its first attack on a civilian-populated area since the war, when it fired 170 artillery shells at Yeonpyeong. Four people were killed, including two civilians. —AFP

Japan, Australia push for defense pact amid tension

FUNABASHI: The prime ministers of Japan and Australia toured a military training ground outside Tokyo yesterday, as the two countries seek to bolster defense ties in the face of the North Korean crisis. Malcolm Turnbull and Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe are hoping to thrash out a security agreement on joint defense operations and exercises, with one eye also on China as it expands its naval ambitions.

Diplomats are putting the finishing touches to the proposed defense pact, which would be the first of its kind for Japan and would make Australia Tokyo's closest military partner after the United States. The pact would reportedly lay the ground for Japanese military exercises out of Darwin, the northern Australian city heavily bombed by Japan in World War II. "The (military) agreement, when concluded, will be a pillar of the Japan-Australia security cooperation," said a Japanese diplomat ahead of the talks.

Both sides say boosting military cooperation is vital given the tense situation in the region, with North Korea's missile program bringing the world closer to nuclear conflict than at any time since the Cold War. China's steady expansion of its military and economic influence in Asia Pacific has also encouraged Japan and Australia to draw closer militarily. Standing in front of Australian-made military equipment used by the Japanese Self-Defence Forces, Turnbull urged the international community to keep up the pressure on North Korea. —AFP



FUNABASHI: Visiting Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull (left) and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe listen to a briefing on the PAC-3 surface-to-air missile launcher while visiting the Japan Ground Self Defense Forces' Narashino camp yesterday. —AFP

Australia lifesaving drone makes first rescue in ocean

SYDNEY: A pair of Australian swimmers yesterday became the first people to be rescued in the ocean by a drone when the aerial lifesaver dropped a safety device to distressed teens caught in rough seas. Australia is leading the use of the technology in surf lifesaving, with dozens of drones being trialed on beaches around the country. In what is believed to be a world-first drone surf rescue, two boys on Thursday got caught in three-meter swells while swimming off Lennox Head in New South Wales, near the border with Queensland. Beachgoers onshore raised the alarm to the lifeguards who then alerted the drone pilot, and the aerial lifesaver was deployed in moments.

"I was able to launch it, fly it to the location, and drop the pod all in about one to two minutes," lifeguard supervisor Jai Sheridan told the Gold Coast Bulletin. "On a normal day that would have taken our lifeguards a few minutes longer to reach the members of the public." Other than a little weary from their experience the pair were reportedly unharmed. Along with their ability to spot swimmers in trouble and deliver life saving devices faster than traditional lifesaving techniques, like launching surfboards or rubber dinghies, drones are being used in Australia to spot underwater predators like sharks and jellyfish. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

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This file shows Kim Kardashian attending the 2017 LACMA Art + Film Gala Honoring Mark Bradford and George Lucas in Los Angeles, California.—AFP

Kim Kardashian
announces birth of third
child via surrogate

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This file photo shows Kim Kardashian West (left) and Kanye West attending the 'Manus x Machina: Fashion In An Age Of Technology' Costume Institute Gala at Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. — AFP

Kim Kardashian announces birth of third child via surrogate

Reality star Kim Kardashian and her rapper husband Kanye West Tuesday announced the birth of their third child, a baby girl who was born via a surrogate. "She is here! We're so in love," Kardashian, 37, wrote in a post on her website which she then shared with her 58.3 million Twitter followers. In a brief message, she wrote that their "healthy, beautiful" daughter was born Monday at 12:47 AM local time, weighing 7.6 pounds (3.3 kilograms). The baby girl's name was not announced. "We are incredibly grateful to our surrogate who made our dreams come true with the greatest gift one could give and to our wonderful doctors and nurses for their special care," said Kardashian.

"North and Saint are especially thrilled to welcome their baby sister," she added. Kardashian and West married in May 2014, and already have two children: daughter North, 4, and 2-year-old son Saint. The couple chose to use a surrogate as Kardashian suffered from placenta accreta—a serious condition where the placenta becomes too deeply attached to the wall of the uterus—during her second pregnancy, making a third pregnancy too risky, according to celebrity website TMZ. TMZ also reported that the Wests paid \$45,000 to the surrogate—who was banned from smoking and taking drugs as well as taking hot baths, dying her hair and eating raw fish during the pregnancy. — AFP

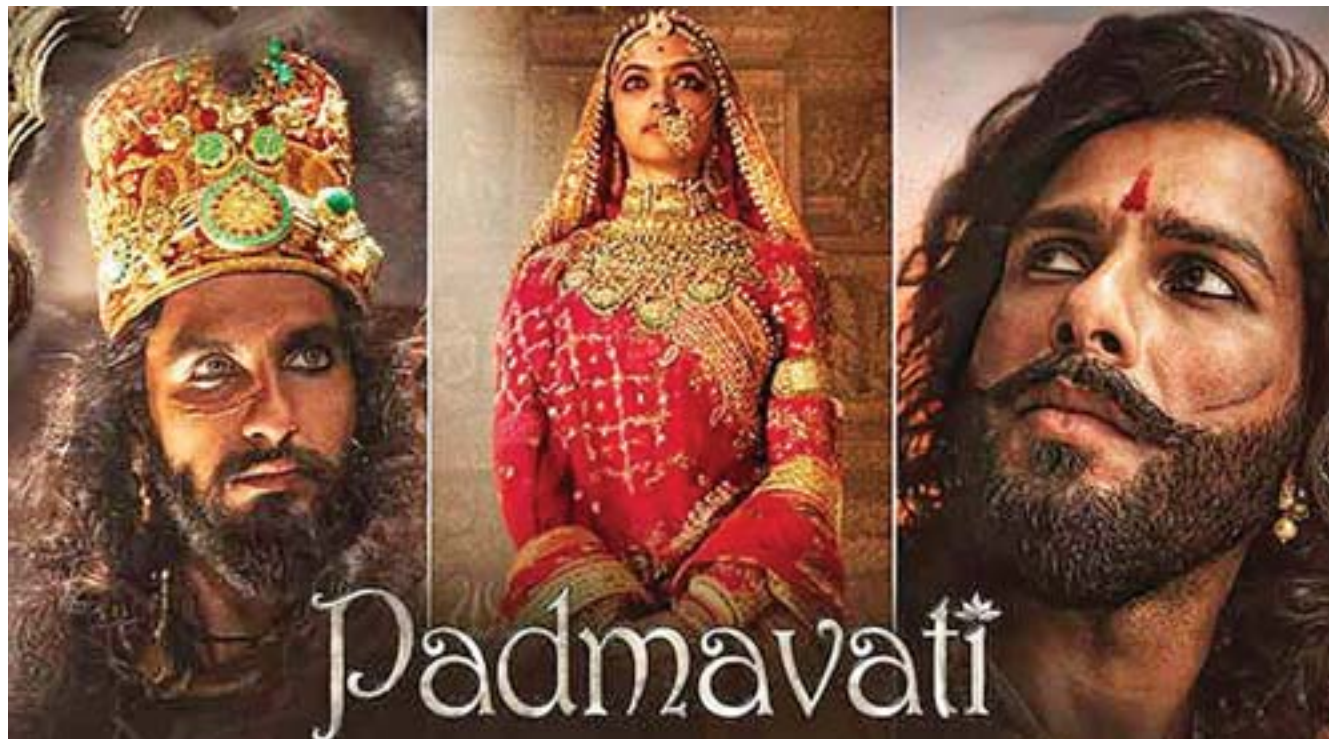
Kevin Spacey investigated over third London assault

British police said yesterday they are investigating a man over a third sexual assault, with the Press Association news agency reporting that US actor Kevin Spacey is the suspected assailant. The assault allegedly occurred in central London in 2005, during Spacey's 11-year tenure at The Old Vic theatre in the British capital. "On 13 December we received an allegation that the man sexually assaulted a man (Victim 3) in 2005 in Westminster," a Metropolitan Police spokeswoman told AFP yesterday. The force does not name people before they are charged with a crime, but the Press Association said the accused was the same man from earlier complaints.

The other two alleged victims said they were assaulted in 2005 and 2008 in the Lambeth area of the city where The Old Vic is located. They came forward in the wake of the Hollywood scandal which erupted last year after numerous claims of sexual assault and harassment were made against mogul Harvey Weinstein. Spacey has since faced a series of abuse allegations, prompting The Old Vic to launch an investigation into the actor's tenure at the theatre between 2004 and 2015. A total of 20 claims of inappropriate behavior were received, covering a broader period of 1995 to 2013, and have not been verified. — AFP



This file photo shows host Kevin Spacey attending the 2017 Tony Awards - Red Carpet at Radio City Music Hall in New York City. — AFP



Top India court lifts ban on release of Bollywood film

India's top court yesterday overturned a ban imposed by several states on the release of a Bollywood epic about a mythical Hindu queen. The Supreme Court said the ban, which followed violent protests by members of the Hindu right who claimed the film falsely depicted a romance between the queen and a Muslim ruler, violated creative freedoms. India's film censor board had cleared "Padmaavat" for release subject to certain changes, but at least four states said they would ban its screening. "Cinemas are an inseparable part of right to free speech and expression," said Chief Justice Dipak Misra.

"States... cannot issue notifications prohibiting the screening of a film." Harish Salve, a lawyer representing the movie's producers, said the states "cannot ban screening to appease their political constituency". Such a move would "lead to constitu-

tional breakdown", he told The Hindu newspaper. Last January protesters from a hardline Hindu group attacked the film's director Sanjay Leela Bhansali and vandalized the set during filming in Rajasthan. The leader of the group also offered 50 million rupees (\$769,000) to anyone who "beheaded" lead actress Deepika Padukone or Bhansali.

Protesters attacked another set near Mumbai in March, burning costumes and other props. "Every story can't be told how bullies want it," tweeted author and screenwriter Chetan Bhagat in response to the court's ruling. "Artists, just as anyone else, have freedom to express in India. The states involved should respect decision and curb bullies." — AFP



50 Cent blasts Jay-Z's album

50 Cent doesn't think Jay-Z's '4:44' resonates with young people. The 42-year-old rap star has insisted that while he doesn't wish to slam the New York star, he doesn't believe that his much-discussed album is relatable to the next generation. Speaking to USTV host Conan O'Brien, 50 explained: "Hip-hop culture's connected to youth culture. "He just had the maturity bleed off into the material ... It's cool for me, like, in my car, I'm listening to it. But the kids, I don't see them actually listening to it." The 'Candy Shop' hit-

maker - whose real name is Curtis Jackson - felt the need to clarify his thoughts on the record, having previously said that the album was "too smart" shortly after its release in 2017.

While the 'Southpaw' actor enjoyed listening to the songs himself, he also felt it was a little too cerebral for a lot of music fans, while he also suggested that it didn't chime with traditional hip-hop culture. He previously explained: "I thought the s**t was a'ight. I liked the s**t, but I'm gonna keep it 100, the s**t was too smart.

"I felt like I was supposed to be wearing

glasses and tie a sweater around my waist. It was, like, Ivy League thing." The rapper also claimed that Jay's age, 48, now counts against him, suggesting that the genre is a young man's game. He shared: "I'mma tell you the truth, n***** is hot out here. They don't wanna hear that s**t. They just wanna have a good time. You can't be the best rapper at 47, because the new n***** is here." — Bang Showbiz

Marvel Studios release image of Ant-Man and the Wasp

Marvel Studios have released a new image from behind the scenes of 'Ant-Man and the Wasp'. The upcoming sequel will see Paul Rudd and Evangeline Lilly playing the two titular superheroes and although not much of the plot is known, the studios have released an image showing the two actors in their shrinking suits. On Instagram, Marvel wrote: "Suit up for #AntManandWasp in theaters July 6! (sic)" In August, Lilly logged on to Instagram to show herself in character and pay tribute to Jack Kirby, the comic book artist who jointly created Ant-Man and the Wasp. Lilly's accompanying caption read: "On set today, celebrating the artist who helped create this amazing character by bringing her to life! I am honored to be playing The Wasp on what would be Jack Kirby's 100th birthday. All hail Jack Kirby and The Wasp! #ThankYouJackKirby #AntManAndTheWasp #bts #behindthescenes #onset (sic)" Kirby along with Stan Lee and Larry Lieber created Janet van Dyne, the mother of her on-screen character and the original Wasp, and Hank Pym - the original Ant-Man - with the mighty miniature hero first making an appearance in the pages of Marvel comic Tales to Astonish #27 in January 1962.

In 'Ant-Man and the Wasp', Michelle Pfeiffer will portray Janet, the wife of Michael Douglas' Hank Pym, in the upcoming sequel. In the comic books, Janet was the original Wasp and a founding member of the Avengers, and continued as a superhero after her husband retired, but she eventually went missing in another dimension and was assumed to be dead. The rest of the cast includes Hannah John-Kamen as Ghost, Walton Goggins as Sonny Burch, Randall Park as Agent Jimmy Woo and Laurence Fishburne as Dr. Bill Foster.

Michael Pena will also star in the film, which sees Peyton Reed, who helmed 2015's 'Ant-Man', returning as director. Both Rudd and Lilly are also set to appear as their superhero alter egos in the upcoming 'Avengers: Infinity War' movie. 'Ant-Man and the Wasp' is scheduled for release in July 2018. — Bang Showbiz



Madonna hits the studio in London



Madonna has been busy recording new music in a London studio. The Queen of Pop - whose last LP was 2015's 'Rebel Heart' - was spotted leaving the recording space in the British Capital on Wednesday and she also posted a photograph of herself singing into a microphone, sharing how thrilled she was to be back at work. She wrote across the photo posted on her Instagram: "Feels so good ... To be working on new music again! (sic)" In December, the 59-year-old megastar teased that she is to embark on a tour this year. Whilst, the 'Material Girl' hitmaker has been spending the past 13 months living in Lisbon, Portugal after her son David, 12, joined football team Benfica FC's youth academy, she said she's eager to get working on the production for a new run of dates for next year.

The 'Hung Up' singer was on 'Live With Kelly & Ryan' where she took part in a game of Sketching With The Stars, alongside her friend Anderson Cooper who asked her about her touring future. On when she plans on hitting the road again, Madonna told Anderson: "Soon. I gotta get my show together. 2017 was soccer mom in Portugal. 2018 ... I'm coming back, baby. I'm coming for you!" Madonna's last extensive run was her 2016 'Rebel Heart World Tour', which concluded in Sydney, Australia on March 20. Meanwhile, the 'Vogue' hitmaker - who also has Lourdes, 21, Rocco, 17, Mercy, 11, and five-year-old twins Stella and Esther - previously said her youngest children are starting to learn about her worldwide fame now that they go to school in the city, as people are "always" asking if their mother is Madonna. She said: "They go to school in Lisbon right now, and they're wondering why everyone's always coming up to them and saying, 'Is your mother, Madonna?' Like, why do they want to know who you are?" "I mean, a lot of my kids have grown up seeing me in concert, but there are certain songs, like, the twins don't know anything. They heard 'Holiday' for the first time a month ago, so that was a fun moment for them." — Bang Showbiz



DJ Khaled's 'top secret' JLo and Cardi B collab

DJ Khaled's collaboration with Jennifer Lopez and Cardi B is "top secret". The 'Wild Thoughts' rapper teased that he's unable to give any more information about the track he's worked on with the Latin beauty and the 'Bodak Yellow' star, but he is "grateful" to get to work with both ladies. And the 42-year-old producer - whose real name is Khaled Mohamed Khaled - has also revealed 'On The Floor' hitmaker Jennifer has more music in the pipeline. He said: "Everything's top secret, [but] I can tell you this: J.Lo's got some new music coming. "I want to thank J.Lo for letting me be one of the producers amongst other great ones, and a feature on the record. I'm grateful." The 'I'm the One' songwriter heaped praise on rising rapper Cardi, and how hard she has worked to get to where she is. He told 'Entertainment Tonight': "Cardi B man, she's doing her thing. God bless her.

"To get in the game, these are the rewards and the accomplishments that we all work hard for, [like] her Hot 100s. "I remember getting my first Hot 100 No. 1. I know the feeling. I know how exciting that is. It's a drive to make you keep going more and more and more and more. "Nothing but love for Cardi B and all the new artists out there doing their thing." Khaled is set to hit the road with Demi Lovato again, kicking off on February 26 at the Viejas Arena in San Diego. Teasing their new show around Demi's latest LP 'Tell Me You Love Me', he said: "She's great. I love her story, meaning, it's inspiring. It's a blessing that she called me and gave me the opportunity to hit the stage with her. "It's going to be like New Year's Eve every night "I got a lot of surprises. I'm coming with it. I'm lighting that stage up." — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features



The metal band Zuriaake performing at a club in Beijing.



Fans gesturing during a performance by metal band Zuriaake at a club in Beijing.

The metal band Zuriaake performing at a club in Beijing. — AFP photos

'LAKE OF BURIED CORPSES': CHINESE METAL BAND DIGS OUT ANCIENT POETRY

Screaming Chinese-poetry inspired lyrics like a demon bursting from the depths of hell, the black-clad singer raises a white chalice above his bamboo hat as fog enveloped the stage. Powered by cacophonous guitars and drums, the black metal band Zuriaake dips into the tenebrous depths of ancient Chinese culture to produce a unique blend of east and west. Though the breed of occult darkness their music celebrates is unwelcome by authorities, the group is enjoying a new surge of popularity among mainland listeners seeking music that reflects their growing national pride. "Out in the land of bones, the hellfire lingers with shimmering luminance," the singer known as "Bloodfire" howls at a crowd of hundreds in Beijing, silhouetted against a projected backdrop of an eerie black-and-white forest.

His shrieking lyrics are written in a dense style of ancient poetry that even those able to make out the words of his throat-raking rasp would need a dictionary to decipher. Zuriaake, formed in 1998, is one of China's longest-running metal bands. Its name is an invented Chinglish portmanteau meaning "lake of buried corpses". Songs such as "Desolated Mountain" and "Whispering Woods" get audiences head banging to subtle verses packed with dark nature imagery. The band wears head-to-toe black, with their faces entirely shrouded under their triangular hats. Bloodfire also wears a woven reed raincoat. The costumes are meant to evoke the image of an old fisherman in a Chinese landscape painting, alone in his skiff and dwarfed by the nature around him. Lanterns and branches adorn their mic stands.

The band has inadvertently ridden a rising wave of interest in nationalist pop culture as the ruling Communists trumpet messages of Chinese exceptionalism, said a black metal music label

founder in the audience who gave the pseudonym VT. He called the process "our society marketing itself to itself." "Young people don't necessarily believe in everything the government says, but now that China is becoming a bigger global power, they still want to find things that fit with their Chinese identity" to be fans of, he said. "Zuriaake fills that need," he said, speaking on condition of anonymity to avoid any political backlash against his label.

'Chinese-style horror'

Black metal is an extreme subgenre of heavy metal that rose to notoriety in the 1990s after anti-Christian Norwegian bands that spearheaded the style burned churches and in one case murdered a band member. It typically employs nature imagery and promotes Satanism and misanthropy in protest of mainstream culture. Artists often perform in white-faced, hol-

low-eyed corpse make-up. But protesting Christianity made no sense in modern China, where Communist atheism has replaced Buddhism and Daoism as the dominant dogma. Nor did corpse paint, given that the Chinese imagine zombies as stiff, hopping cadavers more humorous than terrifying.

"If you've understood the essence of a Western genre and are still just imitating the form, you'll slowly become mediocre. We're playing pure Western metal, but we're unique," Bloodfire told AFP, refusing to give his real name. In China, horror is "more subtle and veiled, about the unknown" rather than gore, he explained. "I want to express Chinese-style horror, and ancient Chinese-style withdrawal from society, nobility and virtue," he said. To do that, the band turned to the chaotic Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods from around 771 to 221 BC for inspiration—the last time they felt Chinese litera-

ture held an emotional intensity and despair that paired well with the black metal aesthetic.

"From that time on, Chinese poetry became more and more formalized, and became increasingly sunny - it lacked darkness," Bloodfire said. The band's music, he said, tries to convey the feelings of bygone Chinese literati who sought to "live in seclusion and not involve themselves in worldly affairs, despite having a clear picture of the world and its problems."

'It speaks to me'

For nearly two decades, Zuriaake's band members have remained anonymous to their fans, using stage names and never speaking in character. Instead, they bow and make traditional hand gestures of respect towards the audience at the end of their sets. "We want people to feel each person on stage is nothing but a symbol," said Bloodfire. As the birthplace of Confucius, the group's home province of Shandong has always been "more conservative and slower to be influenced by the West than other places," explained guitarist Sly.

While traditional culture industries boom there, there is very little by way of rock and roll. "You can easily buy zithers, ink brushes, and chess sets, but not electric guitars," Sly laughed, adding that it was perhaps why they felt most comfortable expressing themselves in ancient verse. Zhang Xia, 32, flew from the southernmost province of Guangzhou just to catch Zuriaake live in Beijing. "All of our music culture is imitating Western music, but they're different," she said. "I've always liked mystery and the occult, but because of the traditional Chinese elements, Zuriaake speaks more to me." — AFP



A crowd surfer among concert-goers during a metal rock band performance at a club in Beijing.

WOODY ALLEN BACKLASH GROWS AS DAUGHTER SAYS TELLING 'TRUTH'

Woody Allen faced a growing backlash Wednesday after his daughter revived child molestation allegations against the legendary director, asking the world to finally believe her as a sexual harassment watershed sweeps the United States. Dylan Farrow's claim that the director sexually assaulted her as a seven-year-old first surfaced a quarter of a century ago in the wake of her mother's bitter split from Allen, who ran off in 1992 with his lover's adoptive daughter from a previous marriage, Soon-Yi Previn, 21 years old at the time.

The famed American director of more than 50 movies, winner of four Oscars and showered with awards in Europe, has always denied the allegations. The claims were never proven and the 82-year-old director has continued to enjoy a glittering career. But the sexual harassment firestorm that has brought down Hollywood titans such as Harvey Weinstein and Kevin Spacey has fueled a growing backlash against Allen. In the wake of the Time's Up movement launched by Hollywood women to counter sexual harassment and sexism, Allen's estranged, adopted daughter said it was time for the world to finally listen.



This file photo shows Woody Allen attending the 'Wonder Wheel' screening at Museum of Modern Art in New York City. — AFP

"Why shouldn't I want to bring him down? Why shouldn't I be angry? Why shouldn't I be hurt?" she told "CBS This Morning" in her first television interview, excerpts of which were broadcast on Wednesday. The full interview is to air today. "Why shouldn't I feel some sort of outrage that after all these years, being ignored and disbelieved and tossed aside?" Farrow added. Asked why people should believe her now, she replied: "I suppose that's on them, but all I can do is speak my truth and hope, hope that somebody will believe me instead of just hearing." The film director's agent did not immediately respond to an AFP request to comment.

It was a devastating expose of alleged rape, assault and harassment published by

Farrow's brother, Ronan, the biological son of Allen and Mia Farrow, in *The New Yorker* last October that helped end Weinstein's career. Since then, a growing number of actresses, including Greta Gerwig, Rebecca Hall, Ellen Page and Mira Sorvino, have announced they regret working with Allen.

'Must be re-examined'

"I believe Dylan," Oscar-winner Natalie Portman told Oprah Winfrey in a recent group interview with other actresses who included Reese Witherspoon. Hall, who appears in his upcoming movie "A Rainy Day in New York" and starred in his 2008 romantic comedy "Vicky Cristina Barcelona," announced on Instagram that she had donated her wage from his latest film to the Time's Up movement. "I see, not only how complicated this matter is, but that my actions have made another woman feel silenced and dismissed," she said. Up-and-coming actor Timothee Chalamet, who also stars in "A Rainy Day in New York" followed suit and also announced he was donating his entire salary from the film to Time's Up and other charities.

"We are in a day and age when everything must be re-examined. This kind of abuse cannot be allowed to continue. If this means tearing down all the old gods, so be it," wrote Sorvino in an open letter to Farrow in *HuffPost* last week. Actor Alec Baldwin, who won acclaim for portraying Donald Trump on *Saturday Night Live*, is one of the few to publicly defend Allen in recent days, saying it was possible to support survivors of pedophilia and sexual assault, and also believe he was innocent.

Dylan Farrow detailed the alleged abuse for the first time in her own words in an open letter published on a *New York Times* blog in 2014. In a follow-up *New York Times* op-ed, Allen repeated his denial and launched a furious attack on Mia Farrow, denouncing her as "more interested in her own festering anger than her daughter's well-being." Last December, Dylan Farrow wrote another op-ed in the *Los Angeles Times* under the headline "Why has the #MeToo revolution spared Woody Allen?" A *New York* judge who presided over the 1994 custody battle between Allen and Farrow ruled that the abuse allegations were inconclusive, but at the same time lambasted the director as "self-absorbed, untrustworthy and insensitive." A Connecticut police investigation also failed to result in any charges. Allen remains with Soon-Yi and the couple have two children. — AFP



A woman sits next to a poster of Russian film 'Going Vertical' in a lobby of the Pioneer cinema in Moscow. — AFP

Record-breaking Russian film relives US-Soviet hoops showdown

A controversial Olympic basketball showdown between the Soviet Union and the US has become the subject of a record-breaking Russian film, as the country's sports are mired in a doping scandal and relations with Washington are at a low point. "Going Vertical" shows Soviet players claiming victory over the US in the final of the 1972 Munich Games, but skirts around the fact that the Americans never accepted defeat because of claims of incorrect refereeing. At a packed viewing in Moscow last week, Russians teared up and broke into applause as photos of the USSR team were shown over the credits. Current scandals may have boosted the film's success, director Anton Megerdichev told AFP, but he said the "energy of that match could not leave anyone indifferent".

The Americans were leading by one point with three seconds left when Soviet Ivan Edeshko heaved a pass across the entire court and his teammate Alexander Belov scored the winning basket as two US defenders fell over. Edeshko, one of four surviving Soviet team members, told AFP that the final-seconds, one-point victory was nothing short of divine intervention. "It's hard to win in three seconds without help, and that help came from God," said Edeshko, now 72.

He recalled official expectations that his team could not beat the US, which had never lost at the Olympic Games. "A second place was planned for us, and when the Soviet Union, a planned economy, plans, you can't leap higher than that," he joked. The movie has netted 1.82 billion rubles (\$32.4 million, 26.3 million euros) since its December release, making it the country's highest-grossing film ever.

Soviet nostalgia

The Soviet players are portrayed as underdogs against their basketball-obsessed Cold War rivals and the film was made by the Trite studio of Oscar-winner Nikita Mikhalkov, known for his nationalist views. However Megerdichev stressed the film has "absolutely no anti-Americanism". "We're proud that we show two points of view and the viewer em-

pathises with Americans no less than with Soviet players," he said. In line with a recent trend in local films, "Going Vertical" elicits Soviet nostalgia, with the multi-ethnic USSR squad symbolizing harmony between Russia and the other republics in the union.

But it also shows Soviet players receiving salaries and medical care far inferior to Western standards and resorting to smuggling contraband goods for extra cash. In one scene players bring tins of beluga caviar to America to sell, while their luggage on the way back from another foreign trip is stuffed with ordinary consumer goods like knitting yarn. The widows of coach Vladimir Kondrashin and player Belov have sued the filmmakers over liberties taken in the script, but director Megerdichev said the work should not be judged as a documentary.

Unclaimed medals

The film ends on a high note and doesn't delve into the fact that the US team refused their silver medals and even decades later do not admit defeat. "We thought that the refereeing was improper and to this day our medals are sitting in Switzerland," said Tom McMillen, a former member of the US squad. Megerdichev said he shot alternative endings, one of which showed the empty pedestal for second place, but settled on a tighter finale. McMillen said the 1972 final led to changes in the sport, encouraging the National Basketball Association to recruit internationally. A rule barring professional NBA athletes from the Olympics was also eventually dropped.

He said a symbolic rapprochement with Russia over the match was considered some years ago and the US team even planned to meet President Vladimir Putin, but it fell apart, "I guess from some geopolitical issues". McMillen had pitched the idea for the US team to accept dual gold medals,

which would then be given to charity, but teammates "feel strongly that they have won the game" and refused, he said. "It's one of those controversies that will go on and on." — AFP

Lifestyle | Fashion

MEN TREATED AS DOGS AND PIGS IN **PARIS CATWALK SHOWS**

File photo shows models present creations by Julien David for the Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection as part of the men's Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP photos



Paris men's fashion week began in earnest Wednesday with two collections showing what dogs and pigs men can be, as the industry reels from a new sexual harassment scandal. French designer Julien David sent out his models wearing dog's heads, from a macho, man-spreading Doberman to an intellectual whippet and a splayed poodle in dungarees. "I wanted to study the human species with a bit of distance. It's a bit of a human laboratory," he told AFP of his show.

Yet as David put the final touches to his study of male types—including a very predatory-looking German Shepherd with his tongue hanging out—little did he know that the fashion world would be hit by new allegations this weekend that two star photographers had harassed a string of models. Later a

show by Flemish master Walter van Beirendonck presented men as pigs. He led out his quirky collection with a litter of pig men in a seeming allusion to France's answer to the #MeToo campaign, #BalancetonPorc (Squeal on your pig).

With little piggy ears sticking out of their hoods, and strategically-placed holes over erogenous zones, the outfits took a dark and world-weary take on the male condition. "One-eyed monster... Dream daddy... pig," read one of his skin-coloured, skin-tight tops worn with leather breeches and braces. But David said his canine imagery was more about concentrating on the clothes, and said his dogs' heads were about shifting the emphasis away from the models and onto his eclectic style.



Models present creations by Walter Van Beirendonck, during the men's Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection in Paris. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features

Thigh-high Ugg boots

"When you look at the dog you don't pay attention to his character, and I wanted to have the same feeling here. If that guy on the top was a real person you would assume a lot of things about him," he said. Real-life men rarely wear overly styled outfits, David said, but "bits of everything—things he has from the past, things he just got, sporty things" that are comfortable. So we shall see how many will be wearing thigh-high Ugg boots next winter. Lots if Y/Project designer Glenn Martens has his way.

Like Baywatch star Pamela Anderson until she realized the boots were made from sheep, the Belgian is a big fan of the Australian sheepskin boots. "They are so comfortable it is like putting your feet into warm butter," he told AFP. "So I thought why not put the whole leg in there." "I'm very sorry for the animals, but we are very comfortable," said the hip creator, who used fake leather in the rest of his over-sized collection which turned on two-in-one jackets and coats. "You have two coats and two jackets in one. It's like merging two bodies together, a bit like love-making," he said of their construction. Like Y/Project and a growing number of men's collections, Japanese label Facetasm went for a co-ed show with male and female models, some of whom even smiled.

It was dominated by a joyous oversized thrift shop look of crumpled denim, baseball jackets, Medusa hairdos and lots of layering. Virgil Abloh's Off-White label picked up on the "pulled shirt" look pioneered by Vetements in its markedly less casual show which went heavy on black, red and mothball-blue. Italian brand Valentino ended the day in much more classic territory with long black and grey winter coats worn with trainers and lifted with rare splashes of red, green and mustard. — AFP



Models present creations for Facetasm, during the men's Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection in Paris. — AFP photos

CONTESTED VERSACE MURDER DRAMA HITS US TELEVISION

Dismissed as "fiction" by the Versace family and met with mixed reviews, a controversial new drama depicting the 1997 murder of Gianni Versace makes its US television debut Wednesday. "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story" is the second edition of a crime story franchise whose first iteration won rave reviews and a bevy of awards for revisiting the 1995 O.J. Simpson murder trial. The latest nine-episode series begins airing on television network FX late Wednesday, before being released on demand in Europe later this week. Like "The People vs. O.J. Simpson," which won two Golden Globes and nine Emmy Awards, "The Assassination of Gianni Versace" is a 1990s celebrity crime story, uniting fame and wealth with the darker underbelly of human nature.

Like "The People," which spun a larger narrative of racial tension between black and white Americans, "The Assassination" paints a wider portrait of gay life in America in the 1990s, prejudice, hostility and bigotry. Versace is played by Venezuelan heart-throb Edgar Ramirez, Oscar-winner Penelope Cruz is Donatella—the hard-headed sister who took over the label after her brother's death—and singer Ricky Martin is Versace's long-term boyfriend, Antonio D'Amico.

But publicity in the run-up to its release has been dominated by the Versace family, who released an angry statement from their global fashion emporium in Milan on January 10. They slammed the series as a "work of fiction," saying they had "neither authorized nor had any involvement whatsoever in the forthcoming TV series" and reacted with particular fury to claims that Versace was HIV-positive. "After so many years we still lack respect for the dead, we want to create a scandal around someone who can no longer defend themselves," said Donatella.

D'Amico, who found Versace on the steps of his beachfront Miami mansion just moments after the July 15, 1997 killing, has complained that images he had seen online of his reaction in the series are incorrect. "The picture of Ricky Martin holding the

body in his arms is ridiculous," he told the Observer newspaper last July. "Maybe it's the director's poetic license, but that is not how I reacted."

'Love and respect'

"Its responsibility may be to just be true enough. But there's something tragic and unfair about becoming a spectacle in death, especially in a spectacle that's more about a murderer than any of his victims," griped a New York Times review. The series is based on the book "Vulgar Favors: Andrew Cunanan, Gianni Versace and the Largest Failed Manhunt in US History," by Maureen Orth, which was published two years after the killing and retraces Cunanan's three-month spree.

As such, the drama is centered less on the Italian fashion ge-

nius and more on spree killer, social climber and compulsive liar Andrew Cunanan, who murdered four other gay men before killing Versace. His motives remain shrouded in mystery. Murdering men from San Diego to Miami, Cunanan was on America's list of top 10 most wanted criminals for more than a month before the Versace murder. Cunanan—portrayed by actor Darren Criss—comes across as an enigma, at times brilliant and charming but also narcissistic and violent. He committed suicide, aged 27, a few days after assassinating 50-year-old Versace.

The 1990s were a time when living openly as a gay man was still met with prejudice and bigotry in the United States, 18 years before the US Supreme Court ruled that same-sex marriage is a legal right. Orth suggests in her book that the lackluster investigation into Cunanan's murders stemmed at least in part from the fact that the victims were gay. At least some filming took place in Versace's Miami home, which is today a boutique hotel where rooms can cost in excess of \$1,000 a night.

Cruz, whose performance has excited critics—and who has worn Versace on the red carpet—said she won Donatella's tacit blessing before accepting the role. "If somebody was going to do it, she was really happy that it was me, because I think she knows what I feel for her," she told US chat show host Ellen DeGeneres. "They're the most generous, kind people. It's important for me that when she sees what I've done, she can feel the love and respect that I have put there," she said. — AFP



Actors Edgar Ramirez and Darren Criss attend the Build Series to discuss "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story" at Build Studio in New York City. — AFP

MixTape

DARK ALLEYS OF CINEMA: ART-HOUSE HORROR MAKES A BOLD COMEBACK

Throwing a spotlight on 'Killing of a Sacred Deer' and 'mother!'

By Aakash Bakaya

Art-house horror is a genre I've always been at odds with. On one hand, I love the risks and diversions these films take with cinematic language. On the other hand, most of them simply leave me with a sense of shallow hollowness. I adore their creative bravery but loathe the inherent selfishness that attitude creates. 'Pretentious' is a word I hate to use when describing a movie. All movies are 'pretentious', but some are simply more so than others. In hindsight, some of the best films ever made came down to the creator's intrinsic 'pretentiousness'. I stress on this word because it has been commonly levied to Yorgos Lanthimos' 'The Killing of a Sacred Deer' and Darren Aronofsky's 'mother!' by both critics and audiences alike.

They were released mere months apart from each other but as much as 'Deer' was praised for its ingenuity, 'mother!' was panned for its overwrought, mishandled symbolism. You could interchange these descriptions and I wouldn't bat an eyelid. Both films are brilliant in their own ways but flawed in more similar areas. Watching them one day after the other, I was left uneasy and tense - they were indeed good companion pieces together and this was something I didn't expect. They also rejuvenated my fascination with psychological horror.

The last few years have seen a new resurgence for the genre. From 'Babadook', to 'It follows' to 2017's massive success of 'Get Out' and indie-darling 'It comes at Night', each has generated passionate discussion and solid followings online. But 'Deer' and 'mother!' have garnered slightly different responses. 'mother!' was widely distributed by Paramount Pictures, but this decision didn't go like they expected. Marketed as a straight-forward horror flick, audiences were left con-

fused and rightly mortified. It's an excruciatingly difficult film to watch, starting off as your typical horror/thriller and then transforms into a disturbing, 'Lynchian' nightmare.

'Killing of a Sacred Deer' is more cinematic in scope and more inclined to its dark comedic vibe that Greek director Lanthimos is known for. Sadly even with the small success of his last venture 'The Lobster' and 'Deer' picking up best screenplay at Cannes, 'Deer' played in a miniscule amount of cinemas. Reaching a smaller audience has left 'Deer' with a more positive response, so it's hard to determine how that reception could change if it reached as wide an audience as 'mother!' did.

But that got me thinking. What was the response to Stanley Kubrick's 'The Shining' and Roman Polanski's 'Rosemary's Baby', two of my favorite horrors films, when they were re-released? Today they are revered as absolute pinnacles of the genre, but they weren't always looked at that way. Those two



the KILLING of a
SACRED DEER

Colin Farrell Nicole Kidman Barry Keoghan
Raffey Cassidy Sunny Suljic Alicia Silverstone Bill Camp

A24



Mix Tape

Friday, January 19, 2018



films are also often brought up as major thematic and tonal inspirations for 'Deer' and 'mother!' respectively. So what makes horror films, specifically those that are still so highly regarded, feel so timeless?

I think it comes down to fear being such a raw, primal instinct. But there are obvious disconnects when those fears involve the macabre - your brain naturally acknowledges the props and makeup. Psychological horror meanwhile invades those caverns in your mind you rarely explore. They make you explore close relationships; they pose difficult questions and never provide straightforward answers. The goal isn't to simply scare but to make you uncomfortable, distraught and troubled.

How Director Martin Scorsese described the feeling of watching Kubrick's 'The Shining' particularly resonated with me. He said "as a filmmaker you have to tell a story to the audience and in so doing, you have to translate it into an image. This means you direct the eye and the heart to look at that image in a certain way, the way you want it to be and the way you want them to see it. I've never seen any director do it like Stanley Kubrick." Basically what he's saying is that certain films might have scenes played out or acted a certain way, but the overall feel of the scene would be completely different. Both 'Deer' and 'mother!' absolutely nail this aspect and it's what truly sets them apart from their modern peers.

Till now, I've constantly brought up 'Deer' and 'mother!' together and that might give the impression that they share more than just the genre they're categorized in. The truth is that they cannot be anymore different. 'Killing of a Sacred Deer' is a modern-day retelling of the ancient Greek play 'Iphigenia in Aulis' that explores themes of retribution, guilt and remorse. It's a beautifully shot tale of muted horror mixed with dark comic undertones that leads to an ending both bizarre and tragic. It's meticulously crafted with claustrophobic slow zooms and unemotional wide shots that are favorably comparable to Kubrick.

There was no scene that could even be close to be classified as horror but that subtle feeling of dread could not be shaken off. It was like looking into a pitch dark room before putting on the lights or the sudden urge to pull back the drawn shower curtains in a stranger's bathroom. It's only in the second act is where the film begins to falter. The plot continues to ramp up the strangeness to absurd levels, and you're left questioning if you're the only person taking all this seriously. That may have been the point and it's a tone director Yorgos Lanthimos known for, but in this film - I don't know how much I chewed before I swallowed.



'mother!' is a different beast altogether. Without giving much away, the story is basically an allegory for The Bible with the majority of the film revolving around the Old Testament. You'll never make that connection looking at the poster or the trailers - you wouldn't be able to connect those dots even after you finish watching it. But the symbolism, whether or not you choose to see it that way, is clear and present. To be fair, there are several more themes woven into the plot and characters which aren't all that difficult to piece together. One might imagine that I would endorse or even recommend 'mother!', but I wholeheartedly do not. I do not want to be responsible for any post-screening trauma this movie might cause and it is as traumatic as they come.

The last 40 minutes of 'mother!' is the very definition of chaos. It's also a brave, startling and absolutely iconic sequence of cinema. I was sickened and awed in equal measure and then "that scene" happened. You'll know what "that scene" is when you watch it (again not recommended!) and it will shake the very fibers of your being. It's not overtly disgusting and far from unnecessary but your mind will dwell on it for a long time. The film as a whole feels like a love letter to Roman Polanski's most acclaimed works as its biblical themes and emphasis on location plays out like 'Rosemary's Baby', but made by a genius-lunatic.

So will these films remain timeless? This of course is up to time to decide, but I have an odd feeling they will. Huge blockbusters filled to the brim with CGI always start showing their age in time but thought-provoking horror and thriller films have a way of staying relevant for many, many years. Their themes still revolve around those facets of humanity we hesitate to speak on but can still relate to - it's what makes cinema such a thought-provoking medium.

As much as I love the films 'Deer' and 'mother!' and what they draw their inspirations from, I am happier to see filmmakers play and innovate with cinematic tropes so blazingly, especially in the art-house horror genre. They might resonate and disturb but they also produce discussion and analyses that go beyond the traditional. If cinema bases its stories around emotion, then these are the films that remain standing shrouded in the corner, compelling us to take a closer look. It's not easy to recommend films that are the equivalent of a stranger standing alone in a dark alley, but sometimes it's important to take those chances. You'll never know how you'll come out on the other side.



super bowl snacks

BAKED POTATO SKINS AND ONION KALE DIP

**Ingredients**

Start to finish: 4 hours (1 hour active)

Servings: 8 to 10

For the dip:

1 cup finely chopped onion
 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
 5 ounces baby kale, coarsely chopped
 2 ounces light cream cheese
 1 1/2 ounces finely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
 One 8-ounce container sour cream
 1 tablespoon minced jalapeno with the ribs and seeds, or to taste
 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

For the potato skins:

3 pounds russet potatoes
 1 head garlic (about 2 inches across)
 6 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh rosemary

By Sara Moulton

I'm not really sure why, but when sports fans assemble in front of their TVs to watch the Super Bowl, major sustenance seems to be required. The big game clearly inspires its viewers to go big. This recipe is made to order for the occasion. In fact, it's two recipes. The first is for potato skins lathered with roasted garlic rosemary butter and baked until crispy. The second is for onion kale dip spiked with fresh chiles (a variation of the classic spinach and onion dip). You can bake and scoop out the potatoes a day ahead of time - saving the innards for delights such as hash browns or shepherd's pie - then just slather the skins with the butter and pop them into the oven about 15 minutes before the game starts. You can also prepare the dip the day before. Convenience aside, the dip's fla-

vor will improve if it's allowed to sit in the refrigerator for a while.

Both dishes can be made healthier. Brush the potato skins with olive oil (mixed with garlic and rosemary) instead of butter and replace half of the sour cream with non-fat Greek yogurt. Taste-wise, you're welcome to swap in spinach for kale, if that's your preference. As for the chiles, I call for chopped fresh jalapenos, but you can replace them with pickled jalapenos, minced chipotles in adobo or hot sauce. And if you don't like spicy food, leave out the chiles. Each of these recipes is more than capable of standing on its own (although if you roll with the dip, you'll need to serve your favorite chips or crackers in place of the potato skins). But together? Touchdown!

Preparation

Make the dip: In a large skillet cook the onion

in the oil over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 8 to 10 minutes.

Add the kale, increase the heat to medium-high and cook, stirring, until all of the kale is wilted, 2 to 3 minutes.

Remove the pan from the heat, add the cream cheese and Parmigiano-Reggiano and stir until the cream cheese is melted. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and add the sour cream, jalapeno, lemon juice and salt to taste. Cover and chill for at least 1 hour.

Make the potato skins: Preheat the oven to 400 F. Prick each potato several times and arrange them on a rimmed sheet pan. Cut off and discard the top quarter of the head of garlic, wrap the garlic in foil and add it to the sheet pan. Roast the potatoes and garlic in the lower third of the oven until the potatoes are very tender and the garlic is very soft, about 1 to 1 1/2 hours.

(The garlic may be done before the potatoes.)

Remove the sheet pan from the oven and let the potatoes and garlic cool for 15 minutes. Increase the oven temperature to 425 F. Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise, and then each half in thirds lengthwise. Scoop out the flesh, (reserving it for another use) and leaving a 1/4-inch thick layer of potato on the skin. Into a small bowl squeeze out the garlic. Add the butter, rosemary and 1/2 teaspoon salt to the bowl; mash and mix well using a fork.

Arrange the potato wedges on the sheet pan, skin side down, and divide the garlic butter evenly among the top sides of the wedges, spreading it to coat all of the surface. Bake the wedges on the lower third of the oven until golden and crisp, about 18 minutes. Sprinkle lightly with salt and let cool briefly on a rack before serving. — AP



Ripe Banana Pancakes

Ingredients

Servings: 18 medium pancakes
 Start to finish: 25 minutes
 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
 1 large egg, separated
 1 cup milk
 1 tablespoon white vinegar
 1/4 cup cream or half and half
 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
 1 ripe banana, mashed with a fork
 Salted butter and real maple syrup for serving

Have some over-ripe bananas?

Then make better pancakes

By Elizabeth Karmel

I hate to throw over-ripe bananas away. It is such a wasted opportunity for fresh fragrant banana bread. But, there is only so much banana bread that one can eat. That is why I asked myself, what else can I make with over-ripe bananas? And, since it was Sunday, banana pancakes popped into my head. I had never made banana pancakes with over-ripe bananas. I usually make them with slices of firm, slightly green bananas because that is how I like to eat fresh bananas. As it turned out, the over-ripe bananas are way better for pancakes.

I also wanted to try a pancake technique that a friend of mine swears by. You separate the egg and blend the yolk and the white into the batter at different times. It is supposed to make the pancakes lighter. I am not sure that it made that much difference but it is easy to do, doesn't take any

extra time like beating egg whites, and the resulting pancakes were light and fluffy and toothsome all at once.

The recipe is pretty basic with both sour milk and cream used as the liquid. I had cream on hand, but you could use half and half. I opted for cream because my milk was 2 percent and not whole milk. If I had had whole milk in the fridge, I would have used whole milk and half and half. I also soured my milk with white vinegar, but you could substitute buttermilk for the milk and vinegar combination.

A touch of nutmeg accented the ripe banana. I mashed the bananas as if I was making banana bread and added it to the batter right before I made the pancakes. The result was incredible almost like banana bread pancakes. I love how the essence of banana was evident through the entire pancake but there were no discernable chunks of fruit.

Preparation

Heat the oven to 250 F and set a sheet pan with a rack. Set aside and whisk the flour, sugar, salt, baking powder, baking soda, and nutmeg together in a large bowl. Combine the milk and the vinegar in a 2-cup glass measuring cup and let sit 1-2 minutes. Add the egg yolk, and cream or half and half and mix well. Add the melted butter to the milk and egg yolk mixture and blend with a fork until well combined. Pour the yolk and milk mixture into the flour mixture and stir with a blending fork until barely combined. Mix the egg white in a small bowl until slightly foamy and add the egg white to the batter. Stir just until a thick batter is formed. Set aside for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, mash a ripe banana in a separate bowl. Just before cooking, combine the mashed banana and the pancake batter. Heat a non-stick skillet over medium heat. When hot, use a spoon or a ladle to drop batter in heaping spoonfuls to

the pan, allowing room for the batter to spread out. Unlike most recipes, I prefer not to "fry" the pancakes in oil or butter. I like a drier non-oily finish. If your skillet is non-stick, this will not be a problem.

Cook for about 1-2 minutes, depending on size. When the pancake begins to bubble, use a thin off-set spatula to gently flip to the other side. The pancake should be golden brown, if the heat is too high, the pancake will burn on the outside and be uncooked on the inside. Cook on the other side for another 2 minutes, or until the bottom of the pancake is golden brown. Remove from the skillet to the baking sheet and place the sheet in the oven while you cook all the batter. Scrape any stray crumbs or scraps out of the skillet as you make the pancakes or the fresh pancakes will pick up the burned bits as they cook. Serve as soon as possible, with salted butter and maple syrup.

Turkey **burger**

recipe has winning flavor combo



Turkey Burgers with Feta and Dill

Ingredients

Makes 4 servings
 1/2 medium red onion
 2 small cloves garlic
 4 stems fresh dill
 1 pound to 1 1/4 pounds ground turkey
 (breast meat; see headnote)
 1/2 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 1/2 cup crumbled feta
 4 whole-grain hamburger buns
 Green-leaf lettuce leaves, for serving

By Bonnie S Benwick

This recipe goes to the head of the class, turkey burger-wise. Its perfectly proportioned, Greek-inspired combo of crumbled feta, red onion and dill makes the meat flavorful and keeps it moist. It would fit right into a plan for eating better in the new year. You could serve this burger without any condiment, but a dollop of tzatziki or squirt of Sriracha would cool it down or spice it up nicely.

Adapted from "Prevention's Mediterranean Table: 100 Vibrant Recipes to Share for Lifelong Health," by the editors of Prevention Magazine and Jennifer McDaniel (Rodale, 2017).

We tested these using 16 ounces and 20 ounces of ground turkey, and we preferred the thicker burgers from the 20-ounce portion. Both work fine.

The burgers can be cooked on an outdoor grill as well. Serve with baked sweet potato fries or a cucumber salad.

Preparations

Heat a grill pan or cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Meanwhile, cut the red onion into thin slices, reserving 4 of them for serving. Finely chop the remaining red onion slices, garlic and dill; together is OK. Transfer to a mixing bowl, then add the ground turkey, salt, pepper and feta. Grease the palms of your clean hands with a light coating of cooking oil spray, then use your hands to gently blend the mixture. Form into 4 equal patties that are 3/4 to 1 inch thick.

Grease both sides of each patty lightly with cooking oil spray, then place in the pan. Cook for about 4 minutes on each side, nicely browning the exterior and making sure the interior is cooked through (165 degrees on an instant-read thermometer). While the burgers are cooking, you can toast the buns and gather condiments. Place lettuce leaves on each bottom bun, then the burgers. Put a slice of red onion on each burger, then finish with the top buns. Serve warm, with condiments.

Comic

WORD SEARCH

Insects

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

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

- | | | |
|-------------|----------|------------|
| ANTS | EARWIG | MOSQUITO |
| APHID | FIREFLY | MOTH |
| BEDBUG | FLEA | SILKWORM |
| BEETLE | FLIES | SILVERFISH |
| BUMBLEBEE | HORNET | TERMITE |
| BUTTERFLY | LACEWING | THRIP |
| CATERPILLAR | LADYBUG | TICKS |
| CICADA | LICE | WASP |
| COCKROACH | LOCUST | WEEVIL |
| CRICKET | MAYFLY | WORMS |
| DRAGONFLY | | |

CROSSWORD 1813



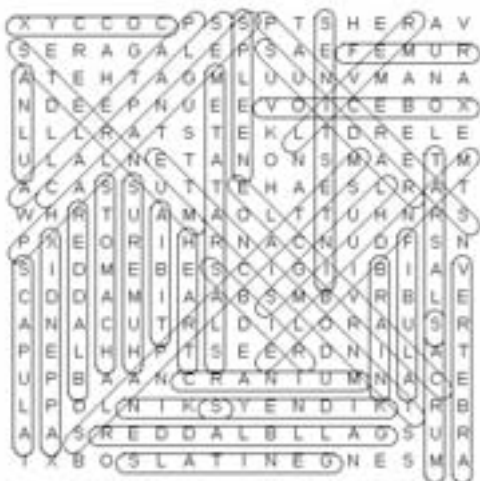
ACROSS

- Strong woody fibers obtained especially from the phloem of various plants.
- 1 species.
- Pertaining to the forward part of a vessel.
- Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
- (Babylonian) Earth goddess.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- (Old Testament) Wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob and Esau.
- Without braces or props.
- Having or joined by a seam or seams.
- A Greek island in the southeast Aegean Sea 10 miles off the Turkish coast.
- (folklore) A small grotesque supernatural creature that makes trouble for human beings.
- A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- Food mixtures either arranged on a plate or tossed and served with a moist dressing.
- United States physiologist (born in Germany) who did research on parthenogenesis (1859-1924).
- A cgs unit of work or energy.
- In bed.
- Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
- (used with singular count nouns) Colloquial for 'not a' or 'not one' or 'never a'.
- A substance that oozes from animal or plant pores.

- #### DOWN
- Gymnastic apparatus consisting of two parallel wooden bars supported on up-rights.
 - American novelist (1909-1955).
 - A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
 - An involuntary vibration (as if from illness or fear).
 - (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
 - The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
 - A unit of luminous flux equal to the amount of light given out through a solid angle of 1 steradian by a point source of 1 candela intensity radiating uniformly in all directions.
 - (Hawaiian) A small guitar having four strings.
 - A unit of time equal to 60 seconds or 1/60th of an hour.
 - Produced by inbreeding.
 - American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
 - German organist and contrapuntist (1685-1750).
 - A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
 - A large number or amount.
 - Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
 - (of eggs) No longer edible.
 - A composer of sacred songs.
 - An acute viral disease of the nervous system of warm-blooded animals (usually transmitted by the bite of a rabid animal).
 - A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
 - The Creator.
 - Large long-armed ape of Borneo and Sumatra having arboreal habits.
 - Constituting the full quantity or extent.
 - The cardinal number that is the product of 10 and 100.
 - A primeval personification of air and breath.
 - Being five more than one hundred.
 - A small drink of liquor.
 - In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
 - A plant fiber used for making rope.
 - A high wave (often dangerous) caused by tidal flow (as by colliding tidal currents or in a narrow estuary).
 - A sum of money paid in compensation for loss or injury.
 - According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
 - A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
 - The extent of something from side to side.
 - A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
 - Deciduous South African tree having large odd-pinnate leaves and profuse fragrant orange-yellow flowers.
 - Similar or related in quality or character.
 - A cleansing agent made from the salts of vegetable or animal fats.
 - A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
 - South American cavy.
 - The month following February and preceding April.
 - Someone who tells a story.
 - Being two more than fifty.
 - Used of a single unit or thing.
 - The state of being elsewhere than in particular place.
 - A doctor's degree in education.

Yesterday's Solution

Human Skeleton & Organs



- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|------------|----------|---------------|------------|----------|--------------|--------------|------------|---------------|---------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|--------|-------------|--|
| Skeleton: | - CARPALS | - CLAVICLE | - COCCYX | - CRANUM | - FEMUR | - FIBULA | - HUMERUS | - INVAGINATE | - MANDIBLE | - METACARPALS | - METATARSALS | - PATELLA | - PHALANGES | - RADIUS | - RIBS | - SACRUM | - SCAPULA | - STERNUM | - TARSALS | - TIBIA | - ULNA | - VERTEBRAE | |
| Organs: | - APPENDIX | - BLADDER | - BRAIN | - GALLBLADDER | - GENITALS | - HEART | - INTESTINES | - KIDNEYS | - LIVER | - LUNGS | - PANCREAS | - SKIN | - SPLEEN | - STOMACH | - VOICE BOX | | | | | | | | |

Hidden sentence: THE AVERAGE HUMAN ADULT SKELETON HAS TWO HUNDRED AND SIX BONES

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



01:05 S.W.A.T.: Under Siege
02:40 Frontera
04:25 Batman Unlimited: Mechs vs. Mutants
05:45 The Net
07:40 The Reckoning
09:15 S.W.A.T.: Under Siege
10:50 Crossfire
12:25 The Net
14:25 Drop Zone
16:15 Thor
18:15 Larceny
19:50 Face/Off
22:10 The Green Inferno
23:55 Bus 657



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Bad Dog
03:35 Swamp Brothers
04:00 Swamp Brothers
04:25 Whale Wars
05:15 Whale Wars
06:02 Wildest Middle East
06:49 Untamed & Uncut
07:36 Night
08:00 Night
08:25 Swamp Brothers
08:50 Swamp Brothers
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Bad Dog
11:05 Wildest Middle East
12:00 Swamp Brothers
12:28 Swamp Brothers
12:55 Whale Wars
13:50 Whale Wars
14:45 Bad Dog
15:40 Wildest Middle East
16:35 Untamed & Uncut
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 Keeping Up With The Krugers
19:20 The Lion Queen
20:15 Bad Dog
21:10 Swamp Brothers
22:05 Keeping Up With The Krugers
23:00 Blood Ivory
23:55 Wildest Middle East



00:05 Benidorm
01:00 New Tricks
02:00 Holby City
03:00 Doctors
03:30 Eastenders
04:05 Benidorm
05:05 New Tricks
06:00 Doctors
06:35 Casualty
07:25 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
17:30 Doctors
18:00 Doctors
18:30 Bad Move
19:00 New Tricks
20:00 Father Brown
21:00 Death In Paradise
22:00 Poldark
23:00 Doctors
23:30 Bad Move



01:00 The First 48
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
03:00 Footsteps In The Snow
05:00 The First 48
06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
09:00 It Takes A Killer

09:30 It Takes A Killer
10:00 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
11:00 Cold Case Files
12:00 The First 48
13:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:00 It Takes A Killer
14:30 It Takes A Killer
15:00 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
16:00 Cold Case Files
17:00 Homicide Hunter
18:00 It Takes A Killer
19:00 The First 48
20:00 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Cold Case Files
23:00 Killer Kids



00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 NASA's Unexplained Files
02:10 Freaks Of Nature
02:35 Freaks Of Nature
03:00 Ecolopolis
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
05:55 How It's Made
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
06:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Ultimate Survival
07:50 How It's Made
08:15 How It's Made
08:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Ecolopolis
11:10 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
12:00 The Carbonaro Effect
12:25 The Carbonaro Effect
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 Ecolopolis
17:00 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
17:50 The Carbonaro Effect
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19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
22:00 The Carbonaro Effect
22:25 The Carbonaro Effect
22:50 Ecolopolis
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:50 Baby Vanished: People Magazine Investigates
01:45 I Speak For The Dead
02:40 Killer Confessions
03:35 Murder Book
04:30 Baby Vanished: People Magazine Investigates
05:25 California Investigator
05:50 California Investigator
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 Nightmare Next Door
08:00 California Investigator
08:25 On The Case With Paula Zahn
09:15 California Investigator
09:40 California Investigator
10:10 Nightmare Next Door
11:05 Disappeared
12:00 Evil Stepmothers
12:55 On The Case With Paula Zahn
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Nightmare Next Door
15:40 Disappeared
16:35 The Perfect Murder
17:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
18:25 California Investigator
18:50 California Investigator
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Nightmare Next Door
21:10 Disappeared
22:05 Grave Secrets
23:00 Evil Online
23:55 I Speak For The Dead



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 & Cat Noir
10:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & 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.
13:20 Lolirock
13:45 Lolirock
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & 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 Tangled: Queen For A Day
18:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & 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 Sports Swap
20:10 Liv And Maddie
20:35 Jessie
21:00 Tangled: Queen For A Day
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 & Cat Noir
23:45 Lolirock

00:15 PJ Masks
00:30 PJ Masks
01:00 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Loopdidoo
02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
02:35 Calimero
02:50 Henry 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
05:45 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
12:15 The Lion Guard
12:45 Sofia The First
13:10 Sofia The First
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 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
17:05 Vampirina
17:30 Vampirina
18:00 PJ Masks
18:25 Puppy Dog Pals
18:50 Sofia The First
19:20 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:50 Doc McStuffins
20:10 The Lion Guard
20:35 P-King Duckling
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:00 PJ Masks
22:25 Sofia The First
22:50 P-King Duckling
23:20 Puppy Dog Pals
23:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers



00:15 Yukon Men
01:05 Madiba
01:50 Deadliest Job Interview
02:35 Sean Conway: On The Edge
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
04:50 Deadliest Catch
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Auction Kings
06:23 Container Wars
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Alaska: The Last Frontier
08:20 Auction Kings
08:45 Container Wars
09:10 Deadliest Catch
09:55 Alaska: The Last Frontier
10:45 Deadliest Catch
11:30 Yukon Men
12:20 Auction Kings
12:43 Container Wars
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Deadliest Catch
14:40 Yukon Men
15:30 Strip The City
16:15 Deadliest Job Interview
17:05 Sean Conway: On The Edge
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 Supertruckers
22:40 Fast N' Loud
23:30 Gold Rush



06:00 Disney11
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Marvel's Spider-Man

07:15 Right Now Kapow
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
11:10 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
13:20 Kirby Buckets
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 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
16:20 Two More Eggs
16:25 Lab Rats
16:50 Lab Rats
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Supa Strikas
18:30 Disney11
19:05 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
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:00 Tia Mowry At Home
00:30 Tia Mowry At Home
01:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
01:30 The Big Eat - Middle East
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Chopped
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:25 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:50 Bake With Anna Olson
07:15 The Kitchen
08:05 The Pioneer Woman
08:30 The Pioneer Woman
08:55 Siba's Table
09:25 Siba's Table
09:55 Cooking For Real
10:25 Cooking For Real
10:55 The Kitchen
11:45 Cooking For Real
12:10 The Pioneer Woman
12:35 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
13:30 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 Cooking For Real
17:30 Cooking For Real
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Guy's Grocery Games
20:00 Extreme Cake Wars
21:00 Beach Bites With Katie Lee
21:30 Beach Bites With Katie Lee
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped



00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Cash Trapped

03:25 Kate's Wardrobe Secrets
04:25 Martin Clunes: Islands Of Australia
05:15 Surprise Surprise
06:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:05 Cash Trapped
08:00 Kate's Wardrobe Secrets
09:00 Martin Clunes: Islands Of Australia
10:00 Surprise Surprise
10:55 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
11:50 Cash Trapped
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
15:10 Cash Trapped
16:00 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
17:00 Paul O'Grady's Animal Orphans
17:50 Surprise Surprise
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Cash Trapped
21:00 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
22:00 Paul O'Grady's Animal Orphans
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Ancient Discoveries
01:00 Ancient Top 10
02:00 The Colour Of War
03:00 In Search Of Aliens
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Clash Of The Gods
05:30 Ancient Discoveries
06:20 Ancient Top 10
07:10 The Universe
08:00 The Colour Of War
09:00 In Search Of Aliens
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Clash Of The Gods
12:00 Ancient Discoveries
13:00 Ancient Top 10
14:00 The Colour Of War
15:00 In Search Of Aliens
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Clash Of The Gods
18:00 The Universe
19:00 Ancient Top 10
20:00 The Colour Of War
21:00 In Search Of Aliens
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Bible Secrets Revealed



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Restoration
02:50 The Warfighters
03:40 The Warfighters
04:30 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
18:30 Ultimate Wheels
19:20 Counting Cars
19:45 Counting Cars
20:10 Fifth Gear
21:00 American Pickers
21:50 Storage Wars
22:15 Storage Wars
22:40 Forged In Fire
23:30 Ultimate Wheels



00:15 Places We Go
00:45 Miguel's Feasts
01:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
01:40 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
02:35 My Pacific Quest

TV Listings

03:30 Raw Travel
 03:55 Raw Travel
 04:25 The Food Files
 04:50 The Food Files
 05:20 Cruise Ship Diaries
 05:45 Cruise Ship Diaries
 06:15 My Restaurant In India
 06:40 My Restaurant In India
 07:10 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 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 Cruise Ship Diaries
 11:15 Cruise Ship Diaries
 11:45 My Restaurant In India
 12:10 My Restaurant In India
 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 Cruise Ship Diaries
 16:45 Cruise Ship Diaries
 17:15 My Restaurant In India
 17:40 My Restaurant In India
 18:10 Places We Go
 18:35 Places We Go
 19:05 My Pacific Quest
 20:00 Raw Travel
 20:30 Raw Travel
 21:00 The Food Files
 21:30 The Food Files
 22:00 Cruise Ship Diaries
 22:25 Cruise Ship Diaries
 22:55 My Restaurant In India
 23:20 My Restaurant In India
 23:50 Places We Go



00:10 Nazi Megastructures
 01:00 Supercar Megabuild
 02:00 To Catch A Smuggler
 03:00 Science Of Stupid Compilations
 03:30 Science Of Stupid
 04:00 Nazi Megastructures
 05:00 Crash Science
 06:00 Supercar Megabuild
 07:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
 08:00 Seconds From Disaster
 09:00 The Indestructibles
 09:30 The Indestructibles
 10:00 Explorer XL
 11:00 The 90s: The Decade That Connected Us
 13:00 Supercar Megabuild
 14:00 Seconds From Disaster
 15:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
 16:00 Explorer XL
 17:00 Original Sin
 18:00 Drugs Inc
 19:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
 20:00 Explorer XL
 20:50 Original Sin
 21:40 Drugs Inc
 22:30 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
 23:20 Startalk



00:20 Desert Lions
 01:10 Safari Brothers
 02:00 Africa's Deadliest - 2017
 02:50 Animal Fight Club
 03:45 World's Deadliest
 04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
 05:35 Africa's Deadliest - 2017
 06:30 Animal Fight Club
 07:25 World's Deadliest
 08:20 Ultimate Animal Countdown
 09:15 Search For King Cobra
 10:10 Wild Scotland S2 Compilations
 11:05 Mission Critical: Animal Avengers
 12:00 Mission Critical
 12:55 Mother Croc
 13:50 Animal Fight Club
 14:45 World's Deadliest
 15:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown

16:35 World's Deadliest Snakes
 17:30 South Africa: Cradle Of Killers
 18:25 The World's Most Wanted Leopard
 19:20 World's Deadliest
 20:10 Ultimate Animal Countdown
 21:00 World's Deadliest Snakes
 21:50 South Africa: Cradle Of Killers
 22:40 The World's Most Wanted Leopard
 23:30 Mission Critical

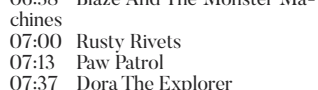


00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 00:36 Rabbids Invasion
 01:00 Rabbids Invasion
 01:24 Sanjay And Craig
 01:48 Sanjay And Craig
 02:12 Winx Club
 02:36 Winx Club
 03:00 Harvey Beaks
 03:24 Harvey Beaks
 03:48 The Loud House
 04:12 The Loud House
 04:36 Breadwinners
 05:00 Breadwinners
 05:24 Get Blake
 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 SpongeBob SquarePants
 11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
 12:12 The Loud House
 12:36 Rabbids Invasion
 13:00 Breadwinners
 13:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
 13:48 Hunter Street
 14:12 I Am Frankie
 14:36 The Thundermans
 15:00 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 15:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
 15:48 Massive Monster Mayhem
 16:12 Massive Monster Mayhem
 16:36 The Loud House
 17:00 The Loud House
 17:24 The Loud House
 17:48 The Loud House
 18:12 The Loud House
 18:36 The Loud House
 19:00 The Loud House
 19:48 The Thundermans
 20:12 Ride
 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



00:15 Shimmer And Shine
 00:38 Shimmer And Shine
 01:01 Max & Ruby
 01:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:34 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:45 The Day Henry Met
 01:49 The Day Henry Met
 01:55 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:41 Zack & Quack
 02:52 Kid-E-Cats
 02:57 Kid-E-Cats
 03:03 Shimmer And Shine

03:25 Nella The Princess Knight
 03:36 Paw Patrol
 03:59 Little Charmers
 04:11 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 04:23 Dora The Explorer
 04:45 Max & Ruby
 05:07 The Day Henry Met
 05:12 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
 09:07 Paw Patrol
 09:30 Shimmer And Shine
 09:53 Nella The Princess Knight
 10:15 The Day Henry Met
 10:22 Paw Patrol
 10:45 Rusty Rivets
 10:56 Rusty Rivets
 11:05 Wallykazam!
 11:28 Bubble Guppies
 11:52 Team Umizoomi
 12:15 Shimmer And Shine
 12:39 Shimmer And Shine
 13:01 Max & Ruby
 13:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 13:47 The Day Henry Met
 13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 14:41 Zack & Quack
 14:52 Kid-E-Cats
 14:58 Kid-E-Cats
 15:04 Shimmer And Shine
 15:26 Nella The Princess Knight
 15:38 Paw Patrol
 16:01 Little Charmers
 16:13 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 16:24 Dora The Explorer
 16:46 Max & Ruby
 17:06 The Day Henry Met
 17:12 Nella The Princess Knight
 17:35 Shimmer And Shine
 17:59 Wallykazam!
 18:21 Zack & Quack
 18:32 The Day Henry Met
 18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 19:00 Rusty Rivets
 19:13 Paw Patrol
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 20:10 Kid-E-Cats
 20:21 Bubble Guppies
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 21:30 Shimmer And Shine
 21:53 Nella The Princess Knight
 22:15 The Day Henry Met
 22:22 Paw Patrol
 22:45 Rusty Rivets
 23:05 Wallykazam!
 23:28 Bubble Guppies
 23:52 Team Umizoomi



00:50 Lego DC: Justice League
 Gotham City Breakout
 02:20 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powde
 03:50 The Tale Of Despereaux
 05:25 Lego DC: Justice League
 Gotham City Breakout
 06:55 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powde
 08:25 Further Adventures Of Professor Branestawn
 09:35 Big Baby
 11:00 Zootropolis
 12:50 Kung Fu Panda
 14:25 Ice Age
 15:50 The Good Dinosaur
 17:25 All She Wishes
 19:00 Houba! On The Trail Of Marsupilami
 20:50 Kung Fu Panda
 22:25 Ice Age
 23:50 The Good Dinosaur



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 17:25 All She Wishes
 19:00 Houba! On The Trail Of Marsupilami
 20:50 Kung Fu Panda
 22:25 Ice Age
 23:50 The Good Dinosaur



00:25 The Late Bloomer
 02:05 Without A Paddle
 03:45 Lies & Alibis
 05:25 Almost Christmas
 07:20 7 Chinese Brothers
 08:45 Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins
 10:40 Wayne's World 2
 12:20 Leap Of Faith
 14:15 7 Chinese Brothers
 15:40 Down With Love
 17:30 Breaking The Bank
 19:20 Down To Earth
 21:00 Edtv
 23:05 The Love Guru



01:10 Secretary
 03:10 Lawrence Of Arabia
 06:45 Newsies: The Broadway Musical
 09:05 Noble
 10:55 Yosemite
 12:30 Lawrence Of Arabia
 16:05 Hoosiers
 18:05 The Challenger
 19:45 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete
 21:35 Margot At The Wedding
 23:10 The Preppie Connection



01:20 Help And Freedom
 02:55 Emilie Jolie
 04:15 DC Superhero Girls: Hero Of The Year
 05:45 Ozzy
 07:25 Louis & Luca And The Snow Machine
 08:50 Swan Princess: Royally Undercover
 10:20 Bunny Tales
 11:40 Last Wizard
 13:00 Help And Freedom
 14:35 Quest For A Heart
 16:05 Bunny Tales
 17:25 Moomin And Midsummer Madness
 18:50 Dwegons And Leprechauns
 20:30 Quest For A Heart
 22:00 Swan Princess: Royally Undercover
 23:30 Moomin And Midsummer Madness



00:05 Sisters
 02:05 Valentine's Day
 04:10 Ride Along 2
 05:55 Zoolander 2
 07:40 Rocky IV
 09:15 Valentine's Day
 11:20 Splash
 13:10 Ride Along 2
 14:55 Mr. Popper's Penguins
 16:35 Rocky Balboa
 18:20 Last Chance Harvey
 19:55 The Assassination Of Jesse James
 22:40 Sahara



00:40 Mythbusters
 01:30 How Do They Do It?
 01:55 Food Factory USA
 02:20 Mysteries Of The Missing
 03:10 How The Earth Works
 04:00 Da Vinci's Machines
 04:48 Mythbusters
 05:36 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Food Factory USA
 06:24 Mysteries Of The Missing
 07:12 How The Earth Works
 08:00 How Do They Do It?
 08:26 Da Vinci's Machines
 09:14 Mythbusters
 10:02 How The Earth Works
 10:50 How Do They Do It?

11:14 Food Factory USA
 11:38 How Things Work
 12:26 Da Vinci's Machines
 13:14 Mythbusters
 14:02 How Do They Do It?
 14:26 Food Factory USA
 14:50 How The Earth Works
 15:38 Da Vinci's Machines
 16:26 How Things Work
 17:14 Mythbusters
 18:02 How The Earth Works
 18:50 Da Vinci's Machines
 19:40 Mythbusters
 20:30 Strip The Cosmos
 21:20 How Do They Do It?
 21:45 Food Factory USA
 22:10 How The Earth Works
 23:00 You Have Been Warned
 23:50 Da Vinci's Machines



01:15 Ask The Dust
 03:15 Resurrecting The Champ
 05:15 The Dead Girl
 06:45 Even Money
 08:30 Snow Cake
 10:30 Havoc
 11:45 Snow Angels
 13:25 Moonrise Kingdom
 14:50 Ask The Dust
 16:45 Tiptoes
 18:15 What Just Happened
 20:00 Inside Out
 21:45 The Matador
 23:30 If Only



00:00 Married At First Sight
 02:00 Mistresses
 03:00 Fashion Star
 04:00 MAFS: The First Year
 05:00 Project Runway
 06:00 Married At First Sight
 08:00 Mistresses
 09:00 Fashion Star
 10:00 MAFS: The First Year
 11:00 Project Runway
 12:00 Married At First Sight
 14:00 Mistresses
 15:00 Fashion Star
 16:00 MAFS: The First Year
 17:00 Mistresses
 18:00 Devious Maids
 20:00 Project Runway All Stars
 21:00 Grey's Anatomy
 22:00 Grey's Anatomy
 23:00 Mistresses



00:20 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 00:42 Say Yes To The Dress UK
 01:05 90 Day Fianc?: Happily Ever After?
 01:50 The Spouse House
 02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 03:20 7 Little Johnstons
 04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras
 04:50 Randy To The Rescue
 05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
 06:00 Outdaughters: Busby
 07:30 7 Little Johnstons
 08:15 Outdaughters: Busby
 09:00 Say Yes To The Dress
 09:25 Extreme Cheapskates
 10:55 Love At First Swipe
 11:40 Love, Lust Or Run
 12:25 Love At First Swipe
 13:10 Iyanla: Fix My Life
 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 14:40 Cake Boss
 17:00 Hodges Half Dozen
 17:50 Save My Style
 18:20 Save My Style
 18:50 Outdaughters: Busby
 19:40 Cake Boss
 20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
 20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
 21:00 Outdaughters: Busby
 21:00 Quints

21:50 Little People, Big World
 22:40 The Undateables
 23:30 Return To Amish



00:00 When Ghosts Attack
 01:00 Ghost Hunters International
 02:00 Mysteries At The Museum
 03:00 Top Secret Waterfalls
 04:00 The Road Less Travelled
 05:00 When Ghosts Attack
 06:00 Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern
 07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
 08:00 House Hunters International
 08:30 House Hunters International
 09:00 House Hunters International
 09:30 House Hunters International
 10:00 Salvage Dawgs
 10:30 Salvage Dawgs
 11:00 Hotel Impossible
 12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
 13:00 Mysteries At The Museum
 14:00 House Hunters International
 14:30 House Hunters International
 15:00 House Hunters International
 15:30 House Hunters International
 16:00 Hotel Impossible
 17:00 Salvage Dawgs
 17:30 Salvage Dawgs
 18:00 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations
 18:30 Bizarre Foods: Delicious Destinations
 19:00 Bizarre Foods With Andrew Zimmern
 20:00 House Hunters International
 20:30 House Hunters International
 21:00 House Hunters International
 21:30 House Hunters International
 22:00 Off The Grid Living
 22:30 Off The Grid Living
 23:00 Building Off The Grid: Yellowstone River



00:05 Broad City
 00:30 Idiotsitter
 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
 03:25 Russell Howard's Stand Up Central
 03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
 04:15 Lip Sync Battle UK
 04:40 Workaholics
 06:50 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 08:55 Punk'd (Bet)
 09:20 Punk'd (Bet)
 09:45 Important Things With Demitri Martin
 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 The Dude Perfect Show
 14:20 The Dude Perfect Show
 14:45 Ridiculousness Arabia
 15:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
 15:35 Ridiculousness Arabia
 16:00 Important Things With Demitri Martin
 16:30 Important Things With Demitri Martin
 16:55 Lip Sync Battle UK
 17:40 Friends
 19:35 Russell Howard's Stand Up Central
 20:00 Graves
 20:30 Graves
 21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
 22:00 Bo Burnham: Words Words Words
 22:50 Martha And Snoop Potluck Dinner Party
 23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you desire to have the admiration of someone or several people; remember, it is important that you hold yourself in high regard before others can. You will pull things together quickly and your confidence will rise; goals seem to be in reach. Other parts of your life may be neglected just now because success in business and finances are what you want the most. Now is the time to unite with others to formulate plans and action. You could seem more attractive and available so take the time to submit your resume or otherwise let yourself be noticed. You could come across as distant and aloof. Daydreaming may try to creep into your day and threaten to take you off course. The stars are arranged in your sign for victory, aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you will desire to escape the mundane in search of productive, positive change. You may feel deep affection for a loved one, could be family or friend. Your libido will demand attention just now as will your need to be in charge and calling the shots. You could find yourself critical and prone to negative opinions. Be mindful of your choices for they could need to be rethought or completely done away with. You could find yourself in an interesting discussion with like-minded people regard new technology in the marketplace. Your concepts are easily relayed to others. You could find yourself very grateful for your position in life with work, friends and family. Your energy will be easygoing as you spend time with someone you love, taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, you could find that your objectives go against the grain of your environment today. Perhaps disagreements and a sense of disrespect seem to define your day. Conflicts with younger people could reach a boiling point; close your eyes and count to ten! Loved ones or belongings that are precious to you are accentuated now. You could say something that causes someone to have a bruised ego. You would like to be recognized for your abilities and contributions. Perhaps the kids in the neighborhood want a community park and exercise or play equipment. Someone in desperate need of your council could approach you. Spend time on yourself this evening by tending to personal grooming and perhaps a good read, gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you may long for exciting new paths to discovery; this cycle opens up opportunities for having a whole new attitude. Any area of improvement or change can take place now through some form of discipline. You could see amazing possibilities in the most unexpected places. The old ways seem useless with new theories and suggestions opening your mind to the future. You will have perfect timing and effective delivery of your thoughts and wishes. There could be someone that expresses doubt or lack of confidence in your methods. Separate yourself from all that seems negative and ill fitting. You have your finger on the pulse of what the public is interested in hearing about; get some tips tonight from a very interesting article, cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, before you begin a new project make sure you are aware of all the facts; doing otherwise will put you in a really bad place. Don't be surprised when you present your new plans to the boss and they are rejected; there could be very valuable input here. Re-evaluate the goals and means of reaching them you have used; toss anything that is not creating profits. Try to hold your tongue even when you are right; this could save a lot of despair. You will clean out closets, drawers or file cabinets as you seek to get things in perfect working order. The more you clear away, the lighter the load to carry; this could mean emotional or physical. You could enjoy a most enlightening conversation this evening. Enjoy dinner at home with a loved one, leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, the energy around you today is one of being unsettled and unfulfilled. It could be one of those days that nothing goes right even the simplest of things can't seem to click. If you can't take the day off, commit to ticking off each thing on your list until you complete the day. There could be personal conflict at the root of all of this negativity. Try to see what you have contributed to this situation and change your behavior; this could make all the difference in the world. Could it be you are not in touch with the personal karma involved; not adjusting your attitude could break something that can't be repaired. Take a look at your natal chart to find some answers as to why you think or act as you do; chin up, you're pretty awesome, virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you have long wanted to go in different directions in several areas of your life. The new year opens with opportunities for extending your interests in very different subject matter. Remember that just because you study something doesn't mean you believe or buy in to it; we can learn what we don't want by watching and listening not necessarily doing. You will have a positive aura surrounding you and it will make a difference for you all day. A new client reveals some secrets about one of your competitors; you will have to decide whether to use it or not. The universe points to your taking the lead in whatever you decide to do. Sit back and think of what you want to accomplish this year and how you might do this successfully, libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you want respect from a person you admire. If you feel trapped or thwarted in some way this could be due to your own decisions; take a good look and you will find the answer. You may become overworked when you refuse help on a certain large project. You are on the money when pairing people with duties but there are some things only you can do. You want simplistic lines in your clothes and furniture and uncomplicated choices in your life. When you feel problems are around every corner, review your choices to make sure you haven't painted yourself into a corner. Make sure you are kind to someone who wishes there could be more between you, even if there can't be! It is easy for you to attract love and money this evening, scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, it could seem that everywhere you turn you are met with a very lagging energy, as though you are trying to run through deep water. You could make terrible decisions due to being discouraged. You should strive for right thinking; slowing down doesn't mean losing it could actually mean winning! Stress is indicated on the domestic front, here, too, should be a cause to pause and consider. At least the tendency is not a downward spiral! Tone down your sensitivity when someone approaches you regarding a touchy subject. Any ongoing problem with a member of the family or a loved one will be solved at some point but not today. Overall the outlook is good for many happy times to come; a little rain must fall for nourishment, sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, some people may not like it when your head is in the clouds and you are contemplating what comes next. One who considers your input incorrect could challenge your strategies. Be still and listen; there could be some truth in these words. Perhaps it's time to look at yourself in a new way. Read, write, paint or enjoy a movie. Exercise your creative mind to relieve career pressures. Day to day chores may seem boring but you don't mind for what you get in return. You happily perform daily tasks housekeeping, cooking, health care - to insure comfort and well being on the human level; capy loves comfortable, clean living! Relax this evening and let your thoughts run free, capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, you feel a strong need to draw near to loved ones during the cycle you've just entered. You desire to be recognized and thanked for all that you bring to relationships. Today is a good time to take a reasonable risk on something involving finances. You welcome a new challenge with open arms and willing spirit. You will rediscover something lovely you had long forgotten. Go inward for a close look at your actions and deeds; have you done those things you committed to take stock of the growth you've had and where it has taken you and those around you. The vibrations of love and unity are present now; your sensitivity to energy from the universe helps you spread the positive energy you crave, aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you could feel a surge in curious energy when you want to find a certain abstract item; your love for the unusual is well known. You could want to do something you know is unfair or just plain wrong; think carefully because the karma we create is what we live with later. The limits of your body could be pushed later as you try to prove you can do something demanding. Remember that it is said, pride comes before the fall. You want nothing to do with gossip or petty foolishness; you could purposely avoid someone for this reason today. You could try a color today that is out of your usual taste. You could slip and let the harsher side of your personality show today. Get busy with something you enjoy and really relax this evening, 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

Worst-case global warming scenarios not credible: Study

PARIS: Earth's surface will almost certainly not warm up four or five degrees Celsius by 2100, according to a study released Wednesday which, if correct, voids worst-case UN climate change predictions. A revised calculation of how greenhouse gases drive up the planet's temperature reduces the range of possible end-of-century outcomes by more than half, researchers said in the report, published in the journal Nature. "Our study all but rules out very low and very high climate sensitivities," said lead author Peter Cox, a professor at the University of Exeter.

How effectively the world slashes CO2 and methane emissions, improves energy efficiency, and develops technologies to remove CO2 from the air will determine whether climate change remains manageable or unleashes a maelstrom of human misery. But uncertainty about how hot things will get also stems from the inability of scientists to nail down a very simple question: By how much will Earth's average surface temperature go up if the amount of CO2 in the atmosphere is doubled?

That "known unknown" is called equilibrium climate sensitivity (ECS), and for the last 25 years the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) the ultimate authority on climate science has settled on a range of 1.5 C to 4.5 C (2.7 to 8.1 degrees Fahrenheit).

Cox and colleagues, using a new methodology, have come up with a far narrower range: 2.2 C to 3.4 C, with a best estimate of 2.8 C (5 F). If accurate, it precludes the most destructive doomsday scenarios.

"These scientists have produced a more accurate estimate of how the planet will respond to increasing CO2 levels," said Piers Forster, director of the Priestley International Centre for Climate at the University of Leeds. Gabi Hegerl, a climate scientist at the University of Edinburgh who, like Forster, did not take part in the research, added: "Having lower probability for very high sensitivity is reassuring. "Very high sensitivity would have made it

extremely hard to limit climate change according to the Paris targets."

Pressure still on

The landmark Paris climate agreement in 2015 called for capping global warming at "well under" 2 C compared to a pre-industrial benchmark, and pursuing efforts for a 1.5 C ceiling. The findings should not be seen as taking pressure off the need to tackle climate change, the authors and other experts warned. "We will still see significant warming and impacts this century if we don't increase our ambition to reduce CO2 emissions," said Forster. —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





248 33 199



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Classifieds

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

Friday, January 19, 2018



STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

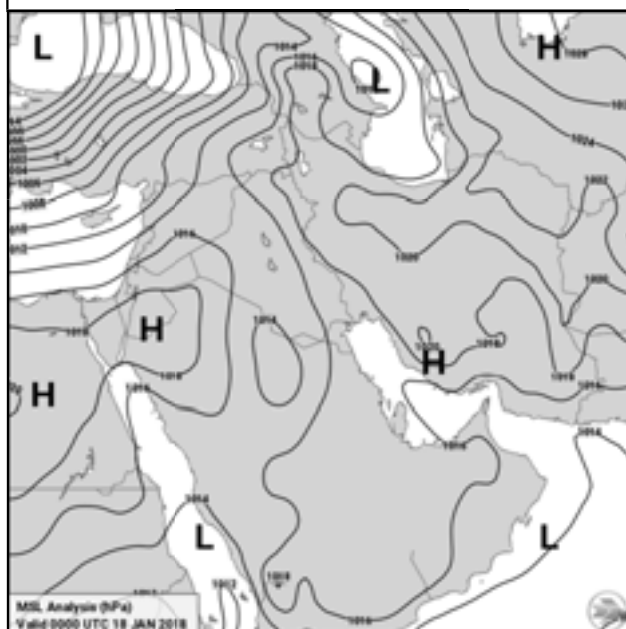
WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	13 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	06 °C
ABDALY	21 °C	05 °C
BUBYAN	---- °C	---- °C
JAHRA	22 °C	09 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	11 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	12 °C
NUWAISIB	21 °C	09 °C
WAFRA	21 °C	06 °C
SALMY	19 °C	07 °C

SFC. CHART

18/01/2018 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	01/19	Warm causing rising dust and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	09 °C	SE-NW	25 - 55 km/h
Saturday	01/20	A significant decrease in temperature	19 °C	07 °C	NW	20 - 40 km/h
Sunday	01/21	Rather cool	20 °C	05 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Monday	01/22	Rather cool	20 °C	06 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:58
Asr	14:54
Sunset	17:14
Isha	18:35

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	20 °C
MIN. Temp.	04 °C
MAX. RH	68 %
MIN. RH	30 %
MAX. Wind	SW 18 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

ACCOMMODATION

One single partition room for rent KD 60 only, Indian bachelor in Hawally Tunis Street opposite McDonald's New Canary Restaurant. Please Contact: 97470947 after 3 pm. (C 5375) 18-1-2018

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

EMERGENCY



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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

FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2018

39 China economy rebounds in 2017 with 6.9% growth



40 India planning to raise health spending by 11 pct in budget



41 South Korea Bitcoin market unfazed by threats of ban



DUBAI: This file photo taken on September 14, 2017 shows an Airbus A380 of Emirates landing at the tarmac at Dubai's International Airport. —AFP

Emirates throws Airbus A380 a lifeline

Able to deploy it on different missions across our network

PARIS: Emirates Airlines said yesterday it has struck a \$16 billion deal to buy 36 Airbus A380 superjumbos just days after the European manufacturer said it would have to halt production without new orders. The company said it had placed firm orders for 20 of the double-decker aircraft with options for a further 16. Deliveries are scheduled to start in 2020. Emirates is already the world's biggest customer for the A380 with 101 in its fleet and 41 more firm orders previously placed.

"This order will provide stability to the A380 production line," the airline's chairman and CEO Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al-Maktoum said. "We've made no secret of the fact that the A380 has been a success for Emirates," he said in a statement. "Our customers love it, and we've been able to deploy it on different missions across our network, giving us flexibility in terms of range and passenger mix."

The Dubai-based airline said that with the new order it will have commitments for a total of 178 A380s worth \$60 billion. The deal was expected to be signed during the Dubai Airshow in November but was delayed without any explanation amid reports of tough negotiations. Instead, Emirates inked a deal to

buy 40 Boeing Dreamliners for more than \$15 billion. Airbus's decision in 2007 to pursue the A380, capable of packing in 853 seats, was diametrically opposed to Boeing's bet on the Dreamliner, marketed as a more efficient plane that could be used for both medium and long-distance flights. But the economics of the four-engine A380 have proved daunting, with airlines having to operate every flight at full capacity in order to make a profit.

'It buys Airbus time'

Airbus warned on Monday that it might have to end production of the A380, having booked no new orders for the plane in two years. It said it regarded Emirates as the only airline with the capacity to place an order of the size required to keep production going. "Quite honestly, if we can't work out a deal with Emirates there is no choice but to shut down the program," Airbus sales director John Leahy said Monday. The company said it needed to build at least six of the aircraft per year for the program to remain viable.

Yesterday, Leahy seemed relieved that Airbus' strategy of

staring down Emirates appeared to have paid off, saying the program was now good to go on for at least another decade. "This new order underscores Airbus' commitment to produce the A380 at least for another ten years. I'm personally convinced more orders will follow Emirates' example and that this great aircraft will be built well into the 2030s," Leahy said.

Airbus is hoping China will lead a revival in orders once demand for long-haul planes picks up, arguing that the plane is ideally suited for mass-market travel and for heavily congested airports. Emirates operates a fleet of 269 wide-bodied aircraft and flies to 157 destinations. Airbus said it has delivered 222 A380s to 13 airlines so far. Stock market investors welcomed the news of the order, pushing Airbus shares more than two percent higher on the Paris bourse in mid-session business. Calling the deal "a relief for Airbus", independent commercial aviation expert John Strickland said it probably saved the A380 program. "Without it, production would likely have been terminated," Strickland said. "It is not a guarantee of financial success for the program but buys Airbus time to go out and secure additional orders from other airlines," he said. —AFP

Business

At factory, Trump highlighted, disappointment at lost jobs

More than 500 layoffs at the Carrier plant alone

INDIANAPOLIS: Duane Oreskovic is disappointed in Donald Trump. In 2016, he voted for the brash businessman in the hopes that the take-no-prisoners Republican would save his job at a Carrier furnace-making factory in the mid-western US city of Indianapolis. Now, as Trump's first anniversary in office approaches, Oreskovic is unemployed. "When President Trump came here and promised to save my job, I believed him myself and a lot of other people," Oreskovic said last week at a rally organized by a progressive political group in a restaurant near the plant. "I was wrong. We were all wrong," he said.

“ I was wrong. We were all wrong ”

gress at stake. Weeks before being sworn into office, Trump personally intervened in the fate of Carrier, making a \$7 million tax incentive deal to keep the plant from moving to Mexico, and promising 1,100 jobs would be saved and more created. A year on, there have been more than 500 layoffs at the Carrier plant alone. Other plants nearby have closed up or cut jobs. Trump's deal with Carrier did save approximately 800 assembly line jobs. But workers here expected more, Oreskovic says. "As of right now, everyone is blaming Trump," he told AFP, adding that he would not vote for the president again.

'Everyone is blaming Trump'

Of the many factors leading to Trump's victory over Hillary Clinton in November 2016, one was the support the real estate mogul received from blue-collar workers in manufacturing towns across America's "Rust Belt." Against the odds, Trump—the Manhattanite with a silver spoon upbringing captivated voters in key states like Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, where factories have been closing for decades and middle class wages disappearing.

But in Indiana, at least some workers are questioning their support of the president or have outright cast him aside, as the 2018 midterm elections loom, with control of Con-

'Pure and simple conman'

Last week's rally near the Carrier plant was organized by "Good Jobs Nation," which aligns itself with Bernie Sanders, the US senator from Vermont who challenged Clinton for the Democratic Party presidential nomination. The group's presence indicates a political opening for Democrats in Indiana, a traditionally Republican-leaning state, in the wake of the chronic layoffs.

The disappointment has made a political star of the man who predicted what would happen: Chuck Jones, who was president of the workers' union when Trump announced the Carrier deal. At the time, Jones questioned how many jobs would actually be saved, earning Trump's ire on



WASHINGTON DC: US President Donald Trump takes a drink of water as he speaks about his administration's National Security Strategy at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center.—AFP

Twitter. Now, Jones is running for local office. "Donald Trump is a liar and an idiot," he told rally participants. "He's a pure and simple conman," he added. "I've talked to people who have had to pull children out of college," he said. "Pretty soon, people's homes are foreclosed on... by then, a lot of the individuals are ending up with drug addiction or alcoholism."

A November survey conducted by Indiana's

Ball State University found 45 percent of voters in the state disapproved of the president's job performance and only 41 percent approved. Trump easily won Indiana—the home state of Vice President Mike Pence—in 2016, by 19 points over Clinton. "An argument can be made that there are some promises made and maybe not delivered," Chad Kinsella, a political science professor at Ball State, told AFP. —AFP

Iraq signs new deal with BP

KIRKUK: Iraq signed a contract yesterday with British energy giant BP to develop oil fields in the northern province of Kirkuk that were retaken from the Kurds last year. The agreement was signed by Iraqi Oil Minister Jabbar Al-Luaybi in Kirkuk, north of Baghdad, where the North Oil Company has its headquarters, AFP reporters said.

Iraqi forces reclaimed a string of major oil fields in Kirkuk after Iraqi Kurds in September voted for independence in a controversial referendum opposed by Baghdad. The Kurds had taken over the fields in 2014 during the chaos of the Islamic State group's rampage across the country and exported oil to Turkey

through their own pipeline. Work to renovate a parallel Iraqi pipeline could take up to two years, according to experts.

Kirkuk province now has a production capacity of 420,000 barrels a day (bpd), according to Baghdad, but only 120,000 barrels a day are being pumped and exports from the region are at a halt. Iraq, the second largest producer in the OPEC cartel after Saudi Arabia, aims to increase the output of the Kirkuk oilfields to one million barrels a day, Luaybi said in November.

The Iraqi oil ministry signed a consultancy contract with BP in 2013 to help the state-owned North Oil Company to develop the Havana and Baba Gurgur fields in Kirkuk province. But it was never implemented as Baghdad lost control of the fields to Kurdish forces the following year.

Iraq reported its oil exports hit 109.6 million barrels a day in December, the same month that the government announced victory over IS. —AFP

US tech trade urge Trump to let spouses work

SAN FRANCISCO: US technology trade groups yesterday urged the Trump administration to retain an Obama-era rule that allows certain spouses of highly skilled guest workers to also work legally in the United States. The call was made in a letter published on the website of the Information Technology Industry Council, whose members include Apple Inc, Amazon.com Inc, Facebook Inc, Alphabet Inc's Google, Microsoft Corp. Ten other national business groups also signed the letter.

The Department of Homeland Security indicated in a regulatory notice in December that it would at least partially undo the 2015 Obama administration decision granting work authorization to spouses of workers on H1b visas, which are used widely in the tech industry. In fiscal 2016, about 42,000 spouses, who entered the country on H-4 visas, were granted work authorization. The total exceeded 36,000 in the first three quarters of fiscal 2017, according to data from US Citizenship and Immigration Services, a component of DHS.

If the work authorization is repealed, H1b visa holders may move to countries where their spouses

can legally work, said David Leopold, a partner at Ulmer & Berne LLP who specializes in immigration. "It's a disincentive to stay here." The DHS notice did not give specifics, but said the agency was reviewing the final rule in light of the April 2017 "Buy American and Hire American" executive order by President Donald Trump.

In their letter, the groups urged the Trump administration to keep the rule in place, "not just to attract and retain talent, but to promote immigration to the United States on the basis of one's skills and merit." It noted that competitors, including Canada and Australia, allow accompanying spouses to work. Changes to the spousal work program could limit "our access as a nation to the most talented people who we need to help drive our economy," said Dean Garfield, chief executive of the Information Technology Industry Council, in a telephone interview.

Business groups that signed the letter include Compete America, CompTIA, the Council for Global Immigration, FWD.us, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Semiconductor Industry Association, the Society for Human Resource Management, TechNet and the US Chamber of Commerce. No decision about the rule will be final until the rulemaking process has been completed, said Joanne F Talbot, a spokeswoman for USCIS, in an email. "USCIS is focused on ensuring the integrity of the immigration system and protecting the interests of US workers, and is committed to reforming employment based immigration programs so they benefit the American people to the greatest extent possible," Talbot said. —Reuters

Business

China economy rebounds in 2017 with 6.9% growth

China last posted double-digit growth in 2010

BEIJING: China's economy grew a forecast-beating 6.9 percent in 2017, picking up steam for the first time since 2010 despite its battles against a massive debt and polluting factories, official data showed yesterday. The world's number two economy eclipsed the official target of about 6.5 percent and picked up pace from the 6.7 percent growth seen in 2016, which was the slowest for more than a quarter of a century. The robust economic expansion indicated stability after slowing down since China last posted double-digit growth in 2010.

"The national economy has maintained the momentum of stable and sound development and exceeded the expectation with the economic vitality, impetus and potential released," National Statistics Bureau head Ning Jizhe said in a report. "We should also

be aware that there are still difficulties and challenges confronting the economy and the improvement of quality and efficiency remains a daunting task," Ning said.

The reading—which beat the 6.8 percent predicted by analysts surveyed by AFP—comes as China kicks its war on pollution into gear, halving industrial production for some steel smelters and mills this winter. The battle has brought unusual blue skies to Beijing, with the density of



Pressure to prevent a credit crisis

dangerous pollution-particulate PM2.5 — dropping by more than 50 percent in the final quarter of 2017. But the latest data showed the economy expanding 6.8 percent in the last quarter of 2017, matching the third quarter figure though it was below the 6.9 percent from the first half of the year.

Ning dismissed questions on the reliability of China's statistics raised after the coastal city of Tianjin and the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia admitted to inflating certain 2016 data. "The system for calculating China's statistics

data is not affected by a small number of places, or some places, or some companies" having accuracy issues with their data, he said. The GDP reading follows strong trade data last week, which showed the humming global economy had propelled China's export machine. "This momentum, especially the part fuelled by external demand, may carry on well into 2018," said Wei Yao, chief China economist at Societe Generale.

Debt fears

The country is also facing pressure to prevent a credit crisis, with local government debt growing 7.5 percent last year to \$2.56 trillion, according to figures released Wednesday. China

has largely relied on debt-fuelled investment and exports to drive its tremendous economic growth of the past four decades but it is now seeking to move its economy to more sustainable consumption-based growth. The latest figures show the services industry grew eight percent for the year with retail sales spiking 10.2 percent, good news for the transition. The International Monetary Fund has repeatedly warned of risks stemming from China's ballooning debt, saying last year that each extra

No more aid

Ahmed "Kura" Omar, BOMA's co-founder and deputy country director, said his native Marsabit is one of Kenya's driest counties. It is often hit by prolonged drought, with many families losing livestock in its mainly pastoralist economy, he added. "Given that there is no foreseeable end to these drought patterns, we need to stop relying on food distribution and aid money, and create more sustainable, life-long solutions," Kura told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

BOMA CEO Kathleen Colson said the program aimed to help break the cycle of dependency on aid, giving women power over their lives and the means to move out of extreme poverty. "People need to be treated with dignity and be empowered to achieve self-sufficiency and effect change on a community level," she said.

BOMA asks villagers to help identify the poorest women among them to participate in the training. After completing the program, they help other women, a process that raises income



QINGDAO: This picture taken on January 17, 2018 shows a Chinese worker cutting steel. —AFP

dollar of debt is producing diminishing returns for China's economy. China's leaders appeared to wipe away some of those concerns at a critical planning meeting in December.

While vowing a crackdown on financial risk and local government debt, leaders called for a reasonable credit expansion this year. That flew in the face of IMF and other economists warnings that China must deleverage. Last year China brought down the pace of debt accumulation but allowed overall credit growth, analysts say. —AFP

Money is power

Jane Naimirdik, a BOMA trainer and mentor, said communities in Marsabit are highly patriarchal, but the program helps women gain a voice in society. The practice of grouping women in threes creates mutual accountability but also offers protection from husbands who may want to take money from them, she added. "We once handled a case where the husband tried to take the wife's savings by force, but we approached (him) and told him the money did not belong to his wife but to the women's savings group and he understood," said Naimirdik.

Moses Galore, Kargi's village chief, said no such incidents had been reported to him, and men appreciated their wives' financial contribution to the household. Magatho Mifo, a BOMA business owner, said her husband was happy about her commercial activities as she could now provide for her family while he travels for days in search of pasture for his herd.

Her neighbors' wives and children buy goods on credit when the men are away looking for grazing, and repay her when they return. This helps the community during lean times and generates more income for her business, she said. "My husband sometimes gets angry when I attend the women's group meetings, because they can last a long time, but once I arrive home with a bag of food or something else, all is forgotten," said Khobobo Gurleyo, another entrepreneurship program member. —AFP

Drought-hit Kenyan women trade their way out of poverty

MARSABIT: Widow Ahatho Turuga lost 20 of her goats to drought early last year, but the shopkeeper is planning to reinvest in her herd once she has saved enough money. "I think I will start with four goats and see how it goes," she said, rearranging soap on the upper shelf of her shop in Loglogo, a few kilometers from Marsabit town. She recalled how frequent droughts had left her on the edge of desperation, struggling to care for six of her own children and four others she adopted after their mother died.

But Turuga is finding it easier to cope since taking part in a rural entrepreneurship program run by The BOMA Project, a non-profit helping women in Kenya's dry northern areas beat extreme poverty and adapt to climate change. The US and Kenya-based organization provides two years of business and life-skills training, as well as mentorship. Groups of three women are each given a start-up grant of 20,000 Kenyan shillings (\$194.55) and a progress grant of 10,000 shillings to set up a business.

After graduating, they carry on operating their businesses — mainly small shops selling groceries and household goods — ei-

Business

India planning to raise health spending by 11 pct in budget

Funds needed for expanding vaccination coverage

NEW DELHI: India is poised to raise its public health spending by 11 percent in the annual budget next month, after rejecting the health minister's demand for a much bigger increase to ramp up disease control, according to government sources and documents. Health Minister JP Nadda sought a "bare minimum" budget of nearly \$10 billion for 2018-19 - 33 percent higher than last year - in a letter to the finance minister on Nov 26, which Reuters has reviewed.

Nadda argued the funds were needed for expanding vaccination coverage and free drugs distribution, and also to ward off a growing threat of non-communicable diseases, such as cancer and diabetes, which killed 6 million people in India in 2016. His request was not approved: the health budget is expected to rise by 11 percent to \$8.2 billion, three government officials told Reuters.

They declined to be named or be identified further as the discussions were confidential.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government last year set a target of raising annual health spending to 2.5 percent of India's GDP by 2025, from 1.15 percent now - one of the lowest proportions in the world. The health budget this year will put that pledge at risk. "What's the point of having a (2025) GDP target? With this funding, it still looks like a herculean task," said one of the officials interviewed. The finance ministry declined

comment, while the health ministry did not respond to requests seeking comment. The budget for the financial year ending March 2019 will be presented on Feb 1.

Shamika Ravi, a member of Modi's economic advisory council, said she wasn't privy to the final budget numbers, but described a \$8.2 billion annual health budget as "not sufficient". "If we underspend on health, it will impact India's overall GDP by lowering productivity in the long term," said Ravi, who is also a research director at Brookings India. Ravi however said she would continue to advise the government to allocate more funds for healthcare to achieve its 2025 GDP target.

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Looks like a herculean task

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Economy vs health

Last year, the government intensified efforts to overhaul the public healthcare system. It capped prices of several medical devices

to help the poor, ramped up screening of non-communicable diseases and, on top of that, also raised the federal health budget by more than a quarter. But the health budget increase for 2018-19 will be lower as the government's finances are stretched by slowing economic growth and tax collections that have lagged under a new sales tax regime, the officials said.

It was difficult to get the 11 percent hike approved, according to one of the officials, who said that it took many rounds of discussions between the health ministry and the fi-

fordability, he said during a visit to Mumbai this week.

"Poor planning regulations are responsible for unaffordable housing in many prosperous cities," Bertaud told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. He pointed to Mumbai's Floor Space Index (FSI), which regulates the amount of floor space in a building relative to the size of the plot of land it sits on. The FSI in Mumbai is set fairly low, which means there is less space available for residences and businesses. The policy has contributed to huge imbalances, said Bertaud.

Mumbai has some of the priciest real estate in the world, while more than half its population lives in slums. Instead of imposing such strict regulations, planners should allow the market to determine how much floor space a building should have, Bertaud said. He said that would encourage the development of lower cost housing, which is in high demand.

"The market will happily serve the poor if regulators allow it, with basic health and safety guidelines and fewer limits," said Bimal Patel, president of the Center for Environmental Planning and Technology, a University in Ahmedabad. With urban populations rising rapidly in India, Patel and Bertaud said that



MUMBAI: Indian workers pose outside the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) during celebrations marking the benchmark 30-share index SENSEX crossing 35,000 points. —AFP

nance ministry. Initially, the finance ministry had earmarked only a five percent increase in the budget, but that was increased after fresh representations by the health ministry, the official said.

Collections under the new national goods and services tax system stood at \$12.6 billion in November, the lowest since its launch in July, which finance officials say have upset the government's overall revenues and their budget calculations. In recent months, the finance ministry has said it wants to boost spending on sectors such as infrastructure, including ports and roads, to boost economic growth. That, along with the need to stick to fiscal tar-

gets, means that the budget for other sectors will be squeezed.

In his letter, Health Minister Nadda made a case for a significant increase in his ministry's allocation, saying investments in public health would eventually result in a "tenfold return for the economy". Low public health spending leads to "catastrophic" medical expenses for people, he wrote. India's overburdened health system remains plagued with an acute shortage of government hospitals in rural areas. In 2016, more than 1 million children died before turning five, the highest number for any nation in the world, a United Nations report said last year. —Reuters

Poor urban planning to blame for India's pricey housing

MUMBAI: Urban planners in many cities around the world are imposing regulations that discourage the creation of affordable housing while slums expand, experts said. Nearly 55 percent of the world's population lives in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to increase to two-thirds by 2050, according to data from the United Nations.

At the same time, the number of people living in slums and informal settlements in cities is also rising, UN data showed. Much of their need for affordable housing could be met if city planners eased regulations that govern the use of land, said Alain Bertaud at New York University's Marron Institute of Urban Management. They should instead allow markets to determine density and af-



KOLKATA: Indian laborers work in a road construction site at the Rajarhat area. —AFP

planners urgently need to change their approaches and use land more efficiently.

Investing in public transport infrastructure is also important, as it would provide people with quicker access to suburban areas where they could afford housing, said Bertaud. Many people are forced to live in inner city

slums, because they would otherwise face long and expensive commutes to their places of work. "Cities like Seoul, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Singapore prove that with the right policy, cities can grow rapidly while improving their infrastructure and their environment," he said. —Reuters

Business

Old hands in South Korea Bitcoin market unfazed by threats of ban

Restrictions would be relatively easy to circumvent

SEOUL/HONG KONG: Threats of a potential cryptocurrency trading ban in South Korea have scared many investors away, but some veterans of the young market are defiant, saying restrictions would be relatively easy to circumvent. Although the cryptocurrency market lost about \$200 billion this week, or a third of its value, these investors - known within the community as "hodlers" after a misspelled meme that went viral during Bitcoin's early days - are used to rollercoaster rides.

China's shutdown of local exchanges in September, for instance, caused a 50 percent drop in Bitcoin, but prices rebounded eight-fold to almost \$20,000. Currently valued around \$10,000, Bitcoin could be poised for a similar whirlwind this time around, some say.

"In case the government shuts down all local exchanges, investors can always go abroad and open an account there," said a South Korean student who declined to be named because of legal risks. "I can ask my friends who study abroad or travel there myself. It's not that big of a problem."

Cryptocurrency experts say the student probably has good reason to be relaxed. A ban could discourage new market entrants, but the anonymity of buyers and sellers and the ability to move digital assets anywhere in the world with a click makes it hard to impose restrictions on existing participants without a global consensus. Places like Singapore and Hong Kong maintain light regulations, while neighbouring Japan has encouraged a vast ecosystem of companies and investors around digital assets by pioneering a set of rules for the industry. Germany has said national restrictions may be useless.

Apple set to pay \$38 bn in taxes

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple announced Wednesday it would pay about \$38 billion in taxes-likely the largest payment of its kind-on profits repatriated from overseas as it boosts investments in the United States. The iPhone maker said in a statement it plans to use some of its foreign cash stockpile, which qualifies for reduced tax rates under a recent bill, to invest in new projects. A source close to the company confirmed that Apple is sharing some of the wealth with employees worldwide through bonuses of \$2,500 worth of restricted shares of stock.

"Huge win for American workers and the USA!" President Donald Trump said in a tweet. Apple, which claims to be the largest US taxpayer, is also one of the biggest beneficiaries of a tax bill passed by Congress in December which lowers the rate of repatriated profits to around 15 percent and cut the corporate tax rate to 21 percent from 35 percent. The tech giant had built a stockpile of more than \$250 billion in overseas holdings, claiming it was not in the interests of shareholders to repatriate the money with a 35 percent tax rate.

VPNs, offline wallets

According to industry experts, the first step to circumventing a ban is hiding IP addresses from authorities via virtual private networks (VPNs). Traders can then continue business as usual. Decentralized exchanges, such as Shapeshift or Stellar Dex, do not require identification and can be accessed from anywhere. Cryptocurrency wallets such as Exodus and Jaxx are linked to such exchanges, so trading and storing the assets can still be anonymous. Authorities in countries with strong legal protections may need a warrant to check computers or smartphones for proof of such activity. Even then, unless caught in the act, the holder can claim no trading has taken place since the legislation was approved and has forgotten the password for the wallet.

Some decentralised exchanges offer derivative products that allow betting on the price of a cryptocurrency against a fiat currency, including the Korean won and Chinese yuan. But cashing out in fiat is not possible on such exchanges. An

option in that case is to trade all cryptocurrencies for a top one such as Bitcoin, Ethereum or Litecoin, and sell it at one the 2,064 crypto ATMs in 61 countries, although the transaction fees can exceed 10 percent. If need be, coins can be stored on offline "wallets" the size of a USB stick.

Alternatively, holders can open bank accounts in countries that have not banned Bitcoin, then join a local centralized exchange where they can trade cryptocurrencies for fiat. "I hold everything in a hard wallet the size of my thumb. I have copies of my private keys in a safe. I have accounts on four exchanges on three continents. If any government wants my money, good luck to them," said a Hong Kong-based investor who



TEL AVIV: An Israeli consultant trades the cryptocurrency, bitcoin, online, in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. —AFP

claims to hold "about \$1 million" in various cryptocurrencies.

Crossing borders

A 30-year-old nurse in Seoul said she had already switched to Hong Kong-based exchange Binance before the government's warnings hit the market. Company officers at Seoul-based exchanges say, anecdotally, such moves have accelerated. "All this could lead to serious money outflow and only the government is not aware of it," one officer said, requesting anonymity.

South Korea accounts for between 5 and 15 percent of daily Bitcoin trading. The value of all Bitcoins is around \$200 billion. If opening ac-

counts overseas proves difficult, friends, family or the local Bitcoin community can help. Another option is to find someone with access to an exchange - preferably using encrypted social media apps such as Whatsapp or Telegram - and sell to them at a discount. But fraud is a risk.

"There could be a black market where people who can cash out offshore can pay you in won for your Bitcoins," said Aurelian Menant, chief executive of Hong-Kong based exchange Gatecoin. But that leaves the door open to "dodgy stuff," Menant said, adding that the fear of scams in the aftermath of a ban may deter new investors, potentially shrinking Korean trading volumes "from billions to millions." —Reuters

Apple said it will now use a large chunk of the overseas cash for US investments. It said it expects to spend more than \$30 billion in direct capital expenditures in the US over the next five years, creating roughly 20,000 new jobs, and claimed the move would contribute \$350 billion in economic activity on home soil.

"Apple is a success story that could only have happened in America, and we are proud to build on our long history of support for the US economy," said Apple chief executive Tim Cook. "We believe deeply in the power of American ingenuity, and we are focusing our investments in areas where we can have a direct impact on job creation and job preparedness. We have a deep sense of responsibility to give back to our country and the people who help make our success possible."

Second campus

Apple plans to spend more than \$10 billion on US data centers, which play an increasingly important role as the California-based iPhone maker focuses on increasing revenue from services and content based in the internet "cloud." The company also said it will establish a second Apple campus, at a location to be disclosed later this year, that will initially house technical support for customers.

As is the case with Apple's other US facilities, the new campus will be entirely powered by renewable energy, the company said. Apple, which employs 84,000 people in the US, has al-

ready spent billions of dollars on a new headquarters in its home city of Cupertino in Silicon Valley. Apple will also boost the size of its Advanced Manufacturing Fund fivefold, to \$5 billion, with the money earmarked to back expansion projects of suppliers in the US.

Apple and Trump have disagreed over a number of issues, but the president on Wednesday praised the company's move to invest in high-tech manufacturing in the United States. "I promised that my policies would allow companies like Apple to bring massive amounts of money back to the United States. Great to see Apple follow through as a result of TAX CUTS," Trump said in his tweet. Tax reform recently passed by the US Congress has been touted by Trump as a way to stimulate investment and hiring, despite criticism that it mostly benefits corporations and the wealthy.

Record-high

Apple shares closed the official Nasdaq trading day at a record high of \$179.10. Late last year leaked financial documents known as the Paradise Papers revealed that Apple shifted much of its offshore wealth from Ireland to a tax haven in the British Isles. After the US technology colossus stated publicly in 2013 that it was paying its proper share of taxes, it moved the bulk of its untaxed overseas cash to Jersey, a British dependency in the Channel Islands, various media organizations reported, based on the once-secret cache of documents. —AFP

Sports

Kuwait shooters stand out with seven gold medals at Amir Int'l Grand Prix

Kuwait is home for best ranges complex at the world level



KUWAIT: (From left), Alessandro Chianese, Ahmed Al-Afasi and Saad Al-Mutairi



Obaid Al-Osaimi and Adnan Al-Ibrahim with the Double Trap winners.

Vonn sets the pace again in Cortina

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO: American alpine skiing star Lindsey Vonn again set the pace dominating for the second day of downhill training ahead of the women's World Cup at Corina d'Ampezzo yesterday.

Vonn—the 2010 Olympic downhill gold medallist—clocked 1min 36.87sec, over a second faster than her leading time on Wednesday down the Olympia delle Tofane course in the Italian Dolomites. Liechtenstein's Tina Weirather was second fastest at 0.96sec with American Jacqueline Willes posting the third fastest time at 1.25sec. Italy's Sofia Goggia, who lead an Italian sweep in Bad Kleinkirchheim, Austria last week, was fourth and American Mikaela Shiffrin fifth fastest a full 1.76sec off the pace.

Last year's downhill winner Lara Gut of Switzerland was seventh fastest. The 33-year-old Vonn has achieved 11 of her 78 World Cup wins in the Italian resort, most recently the downhill and Super G in 2016. With the Winter Olympics looming Vonn is chasing her first downhill win this season with her one World Cup success in the Super-G at Val d'Isere, France. The 22-year-old Shiffrin, who has won nine of her last 10 races, including five in succession in the World Cup, has been in sensational form ahead of the Pyeongchang Games.

Two downhills—including one replacing the cancelled Val d'Isere leg in the French Alps—are scheduled on the slopes in the Italian Dolomites on Friday and Saturday with the Super-G on Sunday. —AFP

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: HH Sheikh Al-Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Seventh Shooting International Grand Prix competitions continued yesterday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

Kuwait dominated the gold medals by winning seven of them, the latest being the double trap in which Ahmed Al-Afasi outlasted Italy's Alessandro Chianese while third place went to Saad Al-Mutairi. The Grand Prix received wide ranging praise from participants, as heads of delegations were keen to thank Kuwait Shooting Sport Club for the facilities they extend, and having officials ready to meet all requirements by their guests.

International Shooting Federation (ISF) Vice President, President of Italy's Shooting Federation Luciano Rossi lauded the support of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of the shooting sports and its athletes, and having patronized an annual tournament carrying his name.

He said the great interest by chairman and members of the higher organizing committee, as well as working committees in addition to the outstanding results by Kuwaiti shooters, was among the factors that distinguished the 7th Grand Prix.

He said Kuwait is home for the best ranges complex at the world level, and has a distinguished group of shooters, as he lauded the performance of Shahad and Sarah Al-Hawal who won the gold and silver medals in the women trap event.

Vice President of the Asian Shooting Confederation Javid Loudhi thanked Kuwait for hosting a tournament that many countries long to participate, adding that the tournament is like an Asian Olympiad, and results cannot be achieved easily, and need good preparation.

He said "we are used to the outstanding organization of tournaments by Kuwait, besides having one of the best shooting complex in the world, and a professional administration.

On his part Lebanon's Shooting Federation President Butros Jalakh said Kuwait's Tournament was great success, which is not strange for Kuwait who accustomed everyone on accuracy in organization, and its shooters are always found on the crowning podiums.



Luciano Rossi



Butros Jalakh

He lauded the preparations for this international event, especially that it carries the name of HH the Amir of Kuwait. Butros finally congratulated Kuwaiti people and government for the success that makes everyone proud.

Meanwhile, Double Trap gold medallist Ahmad Al-Afasi dedicated his medal to HH the Amir and Kuwait people. He said this win came after strong competition with a group of best shooters around the world.

He said Kuwait's preparations came as planned through training camps, in addition to having HH the Amir Grand Prix that remains as an ideal preparation for upcoming tournaments.

Shooter Saad Al-Mutairi said, his winning the bronze medal was against expectations in the presence of shooters from Italy and Russia. He said he is looking forward to continue making such achievements in the tournaments he will participate in, especially that preparations will begin immediately for the World and Arab Championships.

Jones laughs off England's Six Nations injury crisis

England's back-row problems extend beyond Vunipola

TWICKENHAM: Eddie Jones joked his England side "might as well not turn up" to the Six Nations Championship after injuries and suspensions left the reigning champions without 13 players ahead of next month's tournament opener against Italy.

Jones named a 35-man squad featuring eight uncapped players yesterday for the Rome match on February 4. Injuries and suspensions have robbed Jones of several senior figures, with wing Elliot Daly (ankle) and No 8 Billy Vunipola (shoulder) set to miss the entire tournament.

England's back-row problems extend beyond Vunipola. Nathan Hughes is currently sidelined with a knee injury while James Haskell has been ruled out of the Italy fixture and the following week's clash against Wales because of a suspension received while on club duty—as has prop Joe Marler.

England, unlike rival nations such as Ireland, do not centrally contract their players, who are primarily paid by their clubs. Yet the fact remains that since Jones took charge following the then hosts' first-round exit at the 2015 World Cup, England have won 22 out of 23 Tests and they are now bidding to become the

first team to win three successive outright Championship titles. "If you read the papers, then we might as well not turn up," Jones told reporters at Twickenham yesterday.

"I don't even know why we're having this press conference," added the Australian after unveiling his first England squad since the Rugby Football Union (RFU) announced his contract was being extended until 2021 — two years beyond its original cut-off point following next year's World Cup in Japan.

"Ireland are dominating Europe, their sides are going well. They have this central contracting system that allows them to have their players at their peak. "As you've seen, we've got 13 players out. So we've got no hope."

England, however, are 10/11 odds-on favourites with leading British betting firm William Hill and Jones, on a more serious note, said: "I'm not bookmaker but I know we have a squad that's good enough. "We've had good practice (at being without players) over the last 12 months."

"At the end of the day, we've named a squad of 35 and there are still a lot of good players being left out." Following this weekend's club fixtures, the England squad will travel to Portugal for a week-long training camp before re-



Eddie Jones

“If you read the papers, then we might as well not turn up”

convening at their Pennyhill Park training base on January 29. Although there are several newcomers, the rest of Jones's squad, that includes regular Test captain Dylan Hartley, have 898 Test caps between them.

TUILAGI WAITS

But there was no place on Thursday for Manu Tuilagi. The powerhouse Leicester centre is currently making his way back from a knee problem, the latest of several injuries that

have blighted his club and England career. "I'd like to see him get fit," explained Jones. "I think Leicester would like to see him get fit. If he does that, he'll be a chance to get selected."

IMPROVING ITALY

England have won all 23 of their previous Tests against Italy but former Australia and Japan coach Jones believes the Azzurri will prove difficult a stern challenge at Rome's Olympic Stadium. —AFP

Dustin dreaming of Augusta in Abu Dhabi

ABU DHABI: World No. 1 Dustin Johnson spearheads a stellar cast when the \$3 million Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship tees off in the UAE yesterday—but his mind is firmly on the US Masters. Johnson will battle returning former world No. 1 Rory McIlroy, current No. 6 Justin Rose, and Henrik Stenson, Paul Casey and Matt Kuchar who are all within the top 15.

The reigning Europe No.1 Tommy Fleetwood is the defending champion. Johnson, 33, is returning to Abu Dhabi Golf Club's National course having finished second to Fleetwood last year and just like in 2017, is in blistering form at the start of the year. In the PGA Tour's year-opening Tournament of Champions in Hawaii, the American nearly aced a 433-yard par-4 hole en route to winning the champions-only event by a whopping eight shots over Jon Rahm. Last year, after his runner-up finish in Abu Dhabi, he had won three tournaments in February and March before a freak accident on the eve of the Masters ruled him out of the first major of the season. Doing well in the Masters is certainly a goal this year for Johnson, but before that he wants to go one better than his 2017 result in Abu Dhabi. "I felt like this golf course suits me pretty well and I like the setup of it. Last year was the first time being here, obviously playing four rounds in the tournament definitely helps," said Johnson.

"I kind of struggled for a little while last year after Augusta, but I finally felt from the FedEx Cup Playoffs through now, the game is starting to get back into the form it was this time last year where I



ABU DHABI: Dustin Johnson of the United States plays during round one of the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship at Abu Dhabi Golf Club yesterday. —AFP

had a really good run leading into Augusta.

"So it's definitely good. I've been working hard on the game, but the golf swing feels like it's finally getting back to where it was. "I played well in Hawaii, but that was two weeks ago. This is a completely new week and everybody starts at even par, so I've got to start over again."

'ROLL WITH IT'

Johnson said he was eager to get back to Augusta National and compete in the Masters after missing the event last year when he reportedly slipped on a wet staircase and hurt himself on the eve of the tournament. "I was very disappointed I didn't get to play last year, but things happen," he said. —AFP

Garcia's 2018 campaign off to good start

SINGAPORE: Masters champion Sergio Garcia got his 2018 campaign off to a good start at the Singapore Open yesterday, firing a five-under-par 66 to share the lead.

Garcia, who began a spectacular 2017 in Singapore last year, began slowly but picked up the pace around the turn, and fired an eagle and four birdies in his first tournament of the year. The Spaniard, who won his first Major victory at Augusta last April and was named 2017 European Golfer of the Year, ended the day tied for the top spot with American Kurt Kitayama. World number 10 Garcia converted an 18-inch birdie putt at the par-three 17th, then eagled a par-five 18th from three feet. He fired a birdie at the second hole, then picked up another shot at the par-five fourth.

"I'll probably chill a little bit. I did a lot of things right, but I still have lots to work on. I'll try to stay cool, have a nice dinner and get ready for tomorrow," the 38-year-old said.

"This is a great tournament to start the year with." Thailand's Tirawat Kaewsiribandit was threatening to share the lead before play was suspended due to lightning risk with a five-under-par through 16 holes at the Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong course. Seventy-eight players have yet to complete round one. Play will resume early Friday. Kitayama shot six birdies and was bogey-free for 17 holes before dropping a stroke at his final hole of the day. —AFP

Warriors equal team record with 14th road win in a row

Toronto hold on for a home win over Detroit

WASHINGTON: The Golden State Warriors held the Bulls to 12 points in the third quarter after Chicago had a 66-point first half, enabling the defending champs to rally for a 119-112 victory Wednesday night in Chicago. The win was the Warriors' fourth straight to begin a five-game trip and extended Golden State's road winning streak to 14 games, equaling the third longest in NBA history. The Bulls used a 17-0 run bridging the first and second quarters to help build a 66-63 halftime advantage. The Warriors countered with a 19-0 flurry of their own in the third quarter to take a lead they never relinquished. Klay Thompson had 38 points and Stephen Curry 30 for the Warriors, whose 21-3 road record is better than their 16-6 home mark. Nikola Mirotic had a team-high 24 points for the Bulls, who had won their previous three games.

HORNETS 133, WIZARDS 109

Michael Kidd-Gilchrist scored 21 points as Charlotte welcomed the return of coach Steve Clifford to the bench with some record offense in a win over visiting Washington. Clifford, 56, missed 21 games across five weeks because of severe headaches associated with sleep deprivation. The Hornets made their first 10 shots from the field, the best stretch to start a game for the franchise in 15 years. That led to a franchise-record 77 first-half points. Kemba Walker's 19 points and Dwight Howard's 18 points and 15 rebounds also gave the Hornets a lift. Bradley Beal poured in 26 points and reserve Mike Scott racked up 18 points for the Wizards.

HAWKS 94, PELICANS 93

Kent Bazemore scored 20 points, including a go-ahead jumper with two seconds left, to lift Atlanta past visiting New Orleans. The Hawks erased a 15-point halftime deficit with a big third quarter. Ersan Ilyasova (15 points) connected on key 3-pointer in the final minutes of the fourth quarter to help Atlanta win consecutive games for the first time this season. New Orleans' DeMarcus Cousins scored 19 points and grabbed 14 rebounds, but he missed a shot at the buzzer as the Pelicans had their three-game winning streak snapped. Anthony Davis, who was coming off back-to-back 45-plus-point performances, finished with only eight points and seven rebounds. Jrue Holiday scored 22 points to lead the Pelicans.

SPURS 100, NETS 95

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 23 of his 34 points in the second half as San Antonio beat Brooklyn in New York. Patty Mills added 25 points on a night the Spurs were without Kawhi Leonard (quadriiceps) and Manu Ginobili (right thigh contusion). Leonard is out indefinitely, while Ginobili is day-to-day. Allen Crabbe led the Nets with 20 points while Joe Harris scored 18 points, but Brooklyn lost its fifth straight home game and fell for the sixth time in seven games.



MEMPHIS: Enes Kanter #00 of the New York Knicks dunks against Tyreke Evans #12 of the Memphis Grizzlies yesterday at FedExForum in Memphis, Tennessee. —AFP

RAPTORS 96, PISTONS 91

CJ Miles scored 21 points off the bench, his biggest output since scoring 22 on opening night, and Toronto held on for a home win over Detroit. Kyle Lowry had 18 points, nine rebounds and five assists, and Jonas Valanciunas posted 17 points and 16 rebounds for Toronto. DeMar DeRozan also scored 17 points as the Raptors overcame 21 turnovers. Andre Drummond paced the Pistons, who have lost three straight, with 25 points and 17 rebounds. Avery Bradley tossed in 19 points for Detroit.

GRIZZLIES 105, KNICKS 99

Memphis ran off to an 18-point, third-quarter advantage, then held on through a wild finish to defeat visiting New York. With

the Grizzlies up by three, New York's Kristaps Porzingis (21 points) was called for a loose-ball foul going for the rebound with 25 seconds remaining. The Knicks then appeared to force a turnover with 17 seconds left, but the referees ruled a jump ball and slapped New York's Courtney Lee with a technical foul for arguing. Evans (23 points) made the free throw for a four-point lead, and he added another pair three seconds later after winning the jump ball.

HEAT 106, BUCKS 101

Hassan Whiteside notched his 14th double-double of the season, finishing with 27 points and 13 rebounds in Miami's win at Milwaukee. Whiteside hit 10 of 12 shots from the floor and connected on 7 of 9 attempts from

the foul line while blocking six shots as the Heat won for the ninth time in 11 games. Miami also got 15 points apiece from Goran Dragic and Kelly Olynyk. Khris Middleton led Milwaukee with 25 points. Giannis Antetokounmpo added 22 for the Bucks.

THUNDER 114, LAKERS 90

Carmelo Anthony scored 27 points, and Steven Adams chipped in 21 points and 10 rebounds as Oklahoma City toppled visiting Los Angeles. Russell Westbrook added 19 points, six boards and seven assists for the Thunder, and Paul George tallied 13 points. Oklahoma City has won three consecutive games following a three-game skid. The Lakers fell to 0-8 without rookie guard Lonzo Ball, who missed a second consecutive game with a knee injury.

Los Angeles' Julius Randle scored 16 points, all in the first half, while Kentavious Caldwell-Pope posted 10 points in the first quarter before leaving in thesecond with an ankle injury. —Reuters



Khris Middleton led Milwaukee with 25 points

Sports

Federer shines as Djokovic survives brutal heat test

Struggling Wawrinka's early exit from Open

MELBOURNE: Defending champion Roger Federer coolly swept into the Australian Open third round yesterday as Novak Djokovic survived a gruelling fitness test under the brutal Melbourne sun. But with temperatures touching an energy-sapping 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) and ice-towels in use, third seed Garbine Muguruza and 2014 winner Stan Wawrinka both wilted and were knocked out.

Maria Sharapova, in contrast, laid down her title credentials with dominant win against 14th seed Anastasija Sevastova. World number one Simona Halep was also convincing in her straight demolition of Canadian Eugenie Bouchard.

Swiss 19-time Grand Slam champion Federer disposed of Jan-Lennard Struff 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (7/4), avoiding the worse of the furnace-like conditions in his night match. "I practice with him so I had the information I needed," he said, adding that the heat doesn't bother him.

"If you want to get to the top, you've got to play in all conditions." It was never going to be easy for the German. While Federer had made at least the third round each year since his Melbourne Park debut in 2000, Struff had failed to go further than the second round at any Grand Slam.

Six-time Melbourne champion Djokovic

had a much tougher time, coming through a four-setter against Gael Monfils in a thorough examination after being out for six months with an elbow injury. He lost the first set before Monfils began struggling in the second and was heard at one point telling the umpire: "I'm tired and dizzy."

The Frenchman remarkably recovered to make a fight of it before a relieved Djokovic, seeded 14, came through 4-6, 6-3, 6-1, 6-3. "It was tough conditions, brutal, especially the first 90 minutes," he said.

"I'm still not 100 percent, but building. I have a lot of faith and self-belief." The heat took its toll on a host of players, including Wimbledon

champion Muguruza, who suffered with heat-blistered feet. She was knocked out by 88-ranked Hsieh Su-wei from Taiwan 7-6 (7/1), 6-4 but refused to make excuses.

"I maybe could have done things better, but at the end, she deserves to win," she said. Wawrinka also failed to progress, clearly still struggling from a lengthy knee injury lay-off in his straight sets defeat by American Tenny Sandgren.

'DESERVE TO SMILE'

Russian drawcard Sharapova was on Rod Laver Arena early and avoided the brunt of the

2016 to end-2017, Kohli scored 2,203 Test runs at an average of 77.80 including eight centuries. He accumulated 1,818 runs in the one-day format including seven centuries. The 29-year-old was also bestowed a rare honour—selected to captain the ICC's Test and ODI sides, a team in name only that comprises the best players from around the globe.

India emerged as the world's best Test side in 2017 under Kohli, with an unbroken series winning streak at home. He also leads the ODI and Twenty20 teams for the subcontinent. But it has not always been smooth sailing for Kohli, whose men were defeated 2-0 in a Test series against South Africa that wrapped up Wednesday, prompting criticism about his team selection and India's poor Test record away from home.

Smith meanwhile, who sits atop the Test batting chart, had little competition this time around for the prize he also won in 2015. The Australian captain played 16 Tests during the 15-month voting period, scoring 1,875 runs at an average of 78.12, with eight hundreds and five half-centuries. "I've had a really good year. I think I've scored six hundreds in the year and more importantly led the team to an Ashes victory, which is something that is really important to me," said Smith. "I am incredibly humbled and I love playing Test cricket. It's the game that challenges

Kohli crowned ICC cricketer of the year

NEW DELHI: Virat Kohli yesterday was crowned cricketer of the year by the sport's world governing body, capping off a strong innings for the Indian skipper across all three formats of the game. Australian captain Steve Smith was named Test player of the year as the International Cricket Council unveiled its annual awards. Kohli is just the fourth Indian to win the prestigious Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy, following in the footsteps of batting greats Sachin Tendulkar (2010), Rahul Dravid (2004) and teammate Ravichandran Ashwin (2016). "It's the first time winning the Garfield Sobers Trophy, and it's a huge honour for me," Kohli said in a statement.

"It's probably the biggest of all in world cricket and two Indians getting it back-to-back makes it more special." Kohli was also crowned the world's best one-day batsman, winning that title for the second time since 2012.

During the voting period from 21 September



MELBOURNE: Switzerland's Roger Federer plays a forehand return to Germany's Jan-Lennard Struff during their men's singles second round match on day four of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

weather as she showed why she should be again taken seriously in dismantling Sevastova 6-1, 7-6 (7/4).

It was the Latvian who ended her Grand Slam comeback in the last 16 of the US Open in 2017 as she returned from a drug ban. But not this time. Sharapova, a five-time Grand Slam winner and the 2008 Australian champion, was unstoppable in racing through the first set before a battle in the second.

"You know, it was a warm day. I did my job in two sets against someone that's been troubling in the past for me," she said afterwards. "I think I deserve to smile out there after that victory." Being unseeded means she has her work cut out to reach another final. Next up is in-form 2016 Australian Open champion Angelique Kerber, who beat Donna Vekic in two easy sets as she starts to rediscover her best again after a miserable last year. — AFP



CENTURION: File photo taken on January 17, 2018 shows Indian Captain Virat Kohli (C), South African Captain Faf du Plessis, and bowler Lungi Ngidi (L) waiting on the side for their post match interview. Kohli yesterday was crowned cricketer of the year. — AFP

your skills and your mind the most." The Australians have taken home the award in four of the last five years, with Mitchell Johnson winning in 2014 and Michael Clarke in 2013. Indian leg-

spinner Yuzvendra Chahal won international Twenty20 performance of the year for his incredible haul of 6-25 against England at Bangalore last February. — AFP

Sports

Chelsea through on penalties, Bournemouth lose to Wigan

Bony scores winner as Swansea beat Wolves 2-1

LONDON: Chelsea won a penalty shootout to beat second tier Norwich City on Wednesday and sneak into the FA Cup fourth round following a tempestuous replay that ended 1-1 after extra time with the Premier League champions reduced to nine men.

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte was fuming at the final whistle after Pedro and Alvaro Morata were dismissed in extra time and two penalty appeals had been waved away, but the Premier League champions regained their composure to win the shootout 5-3.

Eden Hazard stroked home the winning penalty to decide what had begun as a dire spectacle until Michy Batshuayi gave Chelsea the lead in the 55th minute, before Jamal Lewis levelled in stoppage time for the Championship side.



It has been a dismal start to 2018 for Chelsea

Swansea City, the Premier League's bottom team, also reached the fourth round with Wilfried Bony grabbing the winner in a 2-1 victory over Championship leaders Wolverhampton Wanderers but it was a grim night for the top flight's Bournemouth as they were dumped out after an embarrassing 3-0 replay defeat at third tier Wigan Athletic.

It has been a dismal start to 2018 for Chelsea, who came into Wednesday's match having drawn their previous four games, and the performance

against Norwich will have done little to convince fans they have turned a corner. They did at least find the net, however, which they had not done in their last three matches, with Batshuayi tapping home Kenedy's cross from close range.

Yet most of the drama was still to come and Norwich levelled when Lewis headed home a devilish Timm Klose cross in stoppage time. Chelsea were aggrieved not to get a penalty when Willian appeared to be tripped in the area only for referee Graham Scott to wave away his appeals, even after consulting the Video Assistant Referee (VAR).

Worse was to come for Chelsea as Pedro was dismissed for a second booking and Morata got his marching orders when he was adjudged to have dived in the box and received a second caution.

The shootout, however, went like clockwork for Chelsea as they converted all their kicks after Nelson Oliveira had failed to score Norwich's first. Norwich manager Daniel Farke thought the game was there for the taking. "To be honest it's big disappointment, some of the lads are sitting with tears in their eyes in the dressing room," he told the BBC.

WEAKENED BOURNEMOUTH

Wigan, who won the competition five years ago but have since slipped down the divisions,



LONDON: Norwich City's Northern Irish defender Jamal Lewis (C) scores his team's first goal during the FA Cup third round replay football match between Chelsea and Norwich City at Stamford Bridge in London on Wednesday. —AFP

overcame a weakened Bournemouth side with a first-half effort from Sam Morsy and quick-fire second-half goals from Dan Burn and Callum Elder. Bournemouth made eight changes to the side that had beaten Arsenal on Sunday, clearly signalling where the FA Cup lies in their priorities as they battle to steer clear of the Premier League relegation zone.

Morsy swept home after Will Grigg's initial effort was saved, substitute Burn volleyed in from Max Power's cross and Elder headed in

at the far post to complete a superb victory for the lower league side.

Jordan Ayew gave Swansea the lead after 11 minutes with a superb goal reminiscent of Ricky Villa's famous Cup final replay winner for Tottenham Hotspur against Manchester City in 1981. Wolves, however, equalised after 66 minutes through Diogo Jota only for Bony to poke in at the other end three minutes later after the visitors failed to deal with Tom Carroll's cross. —Agencies

Bullet point previews of Premier League matches

LONDON: Match-by-match facts and statistics ahead of round 24 of the Premier League.

Brighton and Hove Albion v Chelsea (1230)

In nine previous meetings between the two clubs, Chelsea have won seven and lost once. Brighton have won once in their last 12 league games, failing to score in six of their last eight matches. Only Liverpool and Manchester City have beaten Brighton at the Amex Stadium this season. Chelsea striker Alvaro Morata did not have a single shot on target against Leicester City last weekend and has failed to score in his last three league starts. Brighton have dropped to 16th in the standings while Chelsea are in fourth position, level on points with third-placed Liverpool.

Arsenal v Crystal Palace

Arsenal have lost one of their last 16 matches against Palace, an away league defeat last April. Arsene Wenger's side have scored in all their last 25 home league games. Palace are unbeaten in their last five away league games. Hector Bellerin has scored or assisted a goal in three of his last five league games, scoring in two consecutive matches for the first time in his career. Palace have climbed to 12th in the standings while Arsenal are sixth.

Burnley v Manchester United

Burnley have beaten United just once in the last 24 meetings between the two sides across all competitions - a league win at Turf Moor

in 2009. United have won four and drawn one of their last five away league games, scoring at least twice in each of those matches. Sean Dyche will take charge of his 100th league game on Saturday with Burnley seventh in the standings. Paul Pogba has notched four of his nine assists in his last two appearances for United. The Frenchman also has the league's joint-most assists, along with Manchester City's Kevin De Bruyne, but has achieved that number in 10 fewer games. United are 12 points behind league leaders City in second position, a gap they previously overhauled to win the title in 1996.

Everton v West Bromwich Albion

West Brom have beaten Everton in only one of the last 10 league meetings between the clubs - a 1-0 win at Goodison Park in 2016. After halting a 20-game winless run in the league, West Brom have the chance to win back-to-back league games since their opening victories this campaign. Everton are winless in their last five league matches, failing to score in four of them. Everton striker Wayne Rooney has scored 14 league goals in 13 previous starts against West Brom. West Brom are 19th in the standings, two points adrift of safety. Everton are ninth.

Leicester City v Watford

Watford have scored the most (five) and conceded the most (four) goals in the 90th minute or after in the league this season. Watford have lost seven of their last 10 league matches, collecting five out of 30 available points. Leicester's Riyad Mahrez has scored at least once in each of his last four league games against Watford.

Watford forward Richarlison has attempted 71 shots this season. Only Tottenham's Harry Kane and Liverpool's Mohamed Salah have more. Leicester have won five and drawn two of their last 10 league games to climb to eighth in the standings while Watford are in 10th.

Stoke City v Huddersfield Town

Stoke have conceded the most league goals this season (50). Stoke last hosted Huddersfield at the bet365 stadium in 2001, when both sides were in the third tier and played out a 1-1 draw.

Huddersfield have won just two league games on the road this season. Paul Lambert's side have conceded three or more goals in three home league games this campaign, more than any other team. Huddersfield's five-game winless run has dropped them to 14th in the league while Stoke are 18th and on a three-game losing streak.

West Ham United v Bournemouth

Bournemouth last won away at West Ham in a league game in 2015. This match will mark Bournemouth manager Eddie Howe's 100th league game in charge, making him the third youngest English manager to achieve this feat, at the age of 40 years and 52 days. West Ham have won three and drawn one of their last five league games, helping them climb to 11th in the standings. West Ham playmaker Marko Arnautovic has scored six goals and provided three assists in his last seven league appearances. Bournemouth are 14th in the league and are unbeaten in their last four games.

Manchester City v Newcastle United (1730)

City last lost a league game to Newcastle in 2005 and have gone on to win 17 and draw three of the subsequent fixtures. Rafa Benitez's side have won just two of their last 14 league matches. Despite their unbeaten league run coming to end against Liverpool, City have not lost their last 23 home league games. City striker Sergio Aguero has been involved in 13 league goals against Newcastle, scoring 11 and providing three assists. City have a 12-point lead atop the table while Newcastle are three points above the relegation zone in 15th position. —Reuters

Sports

Missed Messi penalty costs Barca in cup derby defeat

Costa strike not enough as Sevilla down Atletico

MADRID: Lionel Messi missed a penalty as Espanyol struck in the dying moments to consign Barcelona to their first defeat since August, 1-0 in the first leg of the Copa del Rey quarter-finals on Wednesday. Oscar Melendo slotted home a neat finish with two minutes remaining of a temperamental derby cup tie, racing onto Marc Navarro's low cross to punish Messi for missing a 62nd-minute penalty and send the home crowd into raptures.

“We knew this day would come, we tried to delay it as much as possible but it couldn't be today,” said Sergio Busquets after the match. “The good thing is that we have the second leg to try to mount a comeback. We are lucky to have that game at home, and we will have to win whatever happens.”

In a match of few chances Barca's penalty, which came after a foul on Sergi Roberto, looked to be the decisive moment for the away side, but Espanyol keeper Diego Lopez dived superbly to his left to push Messi's powerful shot wide.

Navarro then came close to giving the hosts the lead in the 83rd minute with a dipping free-kick that forced an excellent save from Jasper Cillessen, before five minutes later setting up the goal that gave Espanyol their first win over Barcelona in nearly nine years.

“This victory is important for the history of the club and to break down all those walls,” said Espanyol coach Quique Sanchez Flores. “It was telling how long ago it had been since we'd won against Barcelona, now the counter is back zero and we're immensely happy about that.”

ATLETICO STUNNED

Diego Costa's third goal in four matches wasn't enough for Atletico Madrid as Sevilla twice scored late to stun their hosts 2-1 in the first leg at the Wanda Metropolitano. Costa struck for dominant Atletico on his first appearance since being sent off for wildly celebrating his last goal, in a 2-0 league win against Getafe, this one a superb first-time shot past Sevilla keeper Sergio Rico after the ball ricocheted to him in the 73rd minute.

However Sevilla grabbed a hugely fortunate and barely deserved equaliser seven minutes later when a speculative cross deflected off Atletico defender Lucas Hernandez and was then inexplicably pushed into his own net by keeper Miguel Angel Moya.

New Sevilla coach Vincenzo Montella sealed his third win since arriving in Spain—all of coming them in the cup—with a much better goal two

“We knew this day would come”

”



CORNELLA DE LLOBREGAT: Espanyol's defender Didac Vila (L) and Espanyol's goalkeeper Diego Lopez (R) vie with Barcelona's defender Gerard Pique during the Spanish 'Copa del Rey' (King's cup) quarter-final first leg football match between RCD Espanyol and FC Barcelona at the RCDE Stadium in Cornella de Llobregat. — AFP

minutes from time, Joaquin Correa racing on to Wissam Ben Yedder's knock-on and tucking a fine finish past Moya.

Valencia came close to being shocked at their Mestalla stadium by Alaves, who are languishing

in 17th place in La Liga and are just two points above the relegation zone, but Goncalo Guedes and Rodrigo scored in nine second-half minutes to overturn Ruben Sobrino's 66th-minute opener for the away side. — AFP

Man Utd set to make Sanchez highest-paid EPL player

LONDON: Manchester United are set to land Alexis Sanchez from Arsenal by making him the Premier League's highest paid player, according to several reports yesterday. The Chilean striker would earn between 400,000 and 500,000 pounds (\$555,000 and \$690,000) a week before tax by moving to Old Trafford, according to The Sun, the Daily Telegraph and other newspapers.

The 29-year-old's wage demands are said to have scared off Manchester City and Chelsea, leaving United as his main suitors. The Daily Telegraph reported that United have offered Sanchez a four-and-a-half-year contract and he would move for a £30 million transfer fee it is relatively low because he could leave for free at the end of the summer. The deal for the former Barcelona player

would also likely involve a £20 million signing-on fee and a £10 million agent's fee. The Sun reports however that Arsenal could still refuse to allow Sanchez to leave if they do not find a replacement.

However, Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger at yesterday's press conference said the deal was probably going to be done. “I worked on transfers for 30 years so it is likely to happen but at any moment or minute things can break down,” said Wenger. “As long as it's not over the line you have to accept it may not happen.

These kind of things are not guaranteed.” Wenger, whose failure to keep key players and perceived inability to replace them with similarly talented stars has seen support drain away amidst sections of the club's supporters, said he had no problem with the amounts being mentioned in the press of what United were prepared to pay two-time Copa America winner Sanchez. “I respect United because they generate the money they pay by their own resources,” said Wenger, who revealed German star Mesut Ozil would not be joining Sanchez in quitting North London. “United is a club very well managed financially and of course on the pitch so that's why I don't have any problem with the money they pay.” — AFP

Kuwait jumps 15 spots in latest FIFA ranking

KUWAIT: Kuwait jumped 15 spots in the FIFA ranking following its participation in the 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup after its ban was lifted. The first FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking of 2018 ranks Kuwait in the 174th position, up from 189 in the previous ranking. The 15-spot leap is the biggest jump in the latest FIFA ranking.

Germany remain at the summit of a static top ten, while Iceland (20, up 2) are the only team to enter the top 20, with the Netherlands (21, down 1) dropping out. Croatia (15th, up 2) also made some ground, and there were more substantial rises further down the order. Tunisia (23rd, up 4), for example, built on the gains made during their successful FIFA World Cup qualifying campaign, while Kuwait, Sudan (124, up 12), and El Salvador (90, up 10) all registered double-digit jumps. Chinese Taipei (134, up 1), Lebanon (84, up 1), and Palestine



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti striker Abdullah Al-Buraiki reacts after scoring a goal during the 23rd Arabian Gulf Cup which concluded in Kuwait two weeks ago. — AFP

(75, up 5) all reached their best-ever Ranking positions. The next FIFA/Coca-Cola World Ranking will be published on 15 February 2018.

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www.kuwaittimes.net



Kuwait shooters stand out with seven gold medals at Amir Int'l Grand Prix