

Friday Times

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JAMADA ALAWWAL 9, 1439 AH | FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

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DAVOS: US President Donald Trump and Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May attend a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting yesterday. — AFP

Trump takes 'America First' mantra to Davos

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Local

The evil eye moneymaker



IN MY VIEW

By Jeri Al-Jeri
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Islam, the Holy Quran and the Prophet's (PBUH) sayings have taught us about the evil eye and how to protect ourselves from it, by way of charity and prayers that never need a holy man's assistance. Unfortunately, as is the norm, many cultures suffer from their own creativity when it comes to folklore, overwhelming their perception. However, I feel the need to repeat that belief in the evil eye has a religious basis in various respected religions, including ours - Islam.

Nonetheless, it should not be exaggerated or abused to the point where we allow others to manipulate our belief in it. For example, in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Muslim nations, criminals who con honest believers can easily claim that we are fighting Islam itself when we question why they need our money to pray for our health, instead of doing it ourselves? And how is it that they alone own Allah's ability to heal? These people who are claiming to be "sheikhs" have been given a heroic role in the society due to people's poor awareness of their own religion and psychology, or physiology.

Sheikh Faisal Al-Hashimi, who has a PhD in Islamic studies, has stated numerous times in his lectures that you can deal with whatever is paranormal only by your own personal prayers. But if you believe that only this or that sheikh can do this for you, this may cause problems in the purity and simplicity of our Islamic belief.

Coming from an educated family - my father is a businessman, my mother is a teacher and my older sister is a psychologist - I felt that my family was very secure from un-Islamic folktales that say that the evil eye's cure is by the will of some random mystical sheikh and not of his Creator. Sadly, all this went awry when a relative of mine suffered from terrible neck and back pains for an entire year. She was surrounded by her friends in the office who kept "peer-pressuring" her into the belief that her physical pain was the work of the devil! The rest is self-explanatory.

Her pain persisted for a long time, which damaged her emotionally and challenged her belief about her faith and made her pain even more horrific. Her friends suggested she follow the advice of people who claim to be sheikhs, who told her to never seek medical help because it is a sign of disbelief, and never tell anybody about it because the less you think about it, the weaker the devil's work will become.

After suffering for a long time, despite paying for these swindler 'sheikhs' intervention, she finally broke down and went to Germany to fix it in a less than 20-minute surgery. If she had kept listening to the folk-tale remedies of these so-called 'sheikhs' she could have died.

Please don't misunderstand me. There are very many righteous sheikhs who lead a clean path and who offer right guidance. But those who take money and offer healing powers are not always to be trusted.

So, in much clearer terms, in the golden age of Islam, Muslims followed their holy book's teachings and their Prophet's (PBUH) sayings that taught them that only by your own prayers you can protect yourself from the evil eye. And when you suffer from physical symptoms, it is out of your own piety that you seek legitimate and scientific care. Please, let us save the rest.

Not a color!



IN MY VIEW

By Romona Crastro
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The color of our skin is an expression of our genes we have inherited but mostly affected by various environmental factors - UV, pollution and pigmentation. But why do we define the very basis of our social status based on skin color? As a kid, we were warned not to stay out in the sun too long just because we might get too "tanned" and lose our natural color but on the other hand, people spend thousands over artificial tans and complexions.

Let's address the elephant in the room; Racism is a prevalent social malice still existent in our society. Coming from an Indian family, I am unusually fair amongst my peers so I am perceived to be a step ahead of others in terms of jobs, proposals and other walks of life. I fail to understand why the false perception! Beauty, intelligence, reasoning, physical prowess or any inherent human quality for that matter is not defined by how fair or dark a person is. It's extremely inhumane and not justified to differentiate based on color.

Back in school, I had a friend who was dark skinned and was always teased for it and was nicknamed after his skin color. No one took it seriously, as it started off

as a joke. That boy went home after school every day and applied fairness creams and prayed to lighten his skin tone. After a while, he just got used to it. In college, a girl with a very light skin tone was teased of having Leucoderma, she was so frustrated by the comments, she begged her mom to get her a spray tan.

It is not a joke! We are a race of unparalleled abilities only to be pushed back by trivial and unnecessary conflicts over skin tone. One of the most prevalent forms of racism exists on the job application front - we discriminate! Qualifications and personal as well as human skills are tossed out the window? Why should there be a conundrum in the first place when it comes to who is more qualified for the position? No one is infallible whether fair skinned or of a darker tone. We fail ourselves as an example to the younger minds of tomorrow.

The quality of my character, my merit, my talents and abilities are not determined by the color or shade of my skin. We live in a modern, fast-paced and quickly changing world. When will these old, tired and useless stereotypes die?

Differentiation in the school system

IN MY VIEW

By Ashlyn Sequiera
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All schools with the IGCSE system have different categories. In the school that I am in, for example, there are three different types of sets. The first is for English, the second is for Math and the third is for all other subjects. The first group is where students who get good grades are placed. The second group is where average students are placed. The third group is for students who need to work hard and children who have difficulties in studies.

This is not the best way to place children in classes, as it lowers their self-confidence and makes them feel inferior, especially for children who are in the lowest group. Although it encourages children to work harder to achieve what they want, this causes bullying.

This is not the only problem students face. Since they are in the lower groups, their parents start to complain and compare their children with other students. So students feel disappointed in themselves. Also, if one of their friends is in a top category, they start to feel inferior and can no longer focus on their own talents and areas they are good in.

Children then start to act like someone they are not.

They are no longer true to themselves and to others. Dividing students into categories separates them and does not encourage them to mingle with students who are not in their group. There are some exceptions, of course, but not always.

In Finland, the "strategy for achieving equality and excellence in education has been based on constructing a publicly funded comprehensive school system without selecting, tracking or ranking students in their common basic education". (Mitchell, Timothy: The American Political Science Review; March, 1991). This does not draw any kind of barriers between students and most of them learn to be smart and creative with different people surrounding them. Some share the same talents and can teach them to others, and students can help other children with their studies.

If this type of system can be adopted, then many children will not be self-conscious about themselves and this may lead them to become smarter and more creative. The number of children who graduate from school with flying colors may increase, rather than students graduating with a passing grade.

Kuwait Times



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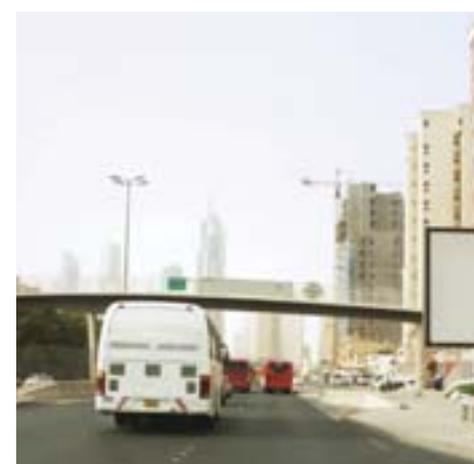
The pedestrian bridges of Kuwait

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Every day you drive on Kuwait's roads, most of your focus is on the cars around you. You drive your car cautiously from the mad speed of many of the drivers as well as those driving at the speed of turtles. You rarely notice the pedestrian bridges and their design and those who walk on them.



Local



Pedestrian bridges have been developed to reduce run-over accidents. However, some may note the insistence of pedestrians on the peril of cutting across roads in front of speeding cars, only meters away from the site of a bridge. In another case, passers-by still have to cross the street for distance or difficult access, either because of road constructions currently taking place, or because of the fact that they are built in the wrong place.

A number of pedestrian bridges are being built on Highway 50 to the airport. Which is a suicidal route for the great number of those crossing the road on foot and the speed of motor vehicles. The pedestrians did not believe this news, as they started out to climb the bridges that are being built, although they are still under construction, which poses a threat to their lives. On the other hand, the old bridges on the main roads, we do not know how safe these are to cross. We did not see periodic maintenance. As Kuwait Times discovered during its tour, there is a gap in the middle of a bridge on the Fahaheel highway.

Many people utilize the pedestrian 'skywalks' and bridges. There are more than you realize until you start driving around and looking for them.

Kuwait has developed a plan to develop and increase the number of pedestrian bridges in the past year. It is anticipated that 24 pedestrian bridges will be constructed in different areas of Kuwait with a total value of KD 7.250 million, in line with international safety and security conditions.

Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi



Local



Iraqi Defense Minister Irfan Al-Hayali receives the Kuwaiti media delegation. — Photos by Mustafa Al-Bader

Defense Minister: Iraq seeks to boost military ties with Kuwait

Lawmaker hopes to see Kuwait-Iraq cooperation as leading example

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Defense Minister Irfan Al-Hayali expressed wishes yesterday to bolster military cooperation with Kuwait to enhance the security and stability of the region. Iraq is keen to cooperate with Kuwait in security and military fields and to conduct joint ground military exercises between the two nations' armies, and to create better coordination and communication, said Hayali during a meeting with a visiting Kuwaiti media delegation.

The Iraqi minister noted that his ministry is exerting tremendous efforts in all issues in relations with Kuwait, including the issue of missing Kuwaiti nationals during and after the Iraqi invasion. Hayali added that he hopes relations between the two countries become ideal and Kuwaiti citizens feel like home and among their family members when they visit Iraq. With regard

to the fight against the so-called Islamic State (IS), Hayali said that the Iraqi army was successful in defeating the organization, and only sleeper cells remain active in the western part of the country.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Deputy Speaker Hamam Hamoudi expressed hope yesterday to see Kuwaiti-Iraqi cooperation as "a leading example for the whole region, especially since the two countries went through a great deal of struggles". Hamoudi also hoped to overcome all obstacles and live in peace, praising the position of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in seeking to resolve differences and his keenness to achieve security and stability in the region.

In a meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti delegation, Hamoudi called on

the delegation to increase bilateral cooperation to achieve joint economic successes, and expressed his thanks for the initiative of His Highness the Amir and his contributions to Iraq, and for hosting the upcoming Iraqi reconstruction conference. The lawmaker stressed importance of media and its role in strengthening ties and relations and the consolidation of positive ideas, affirming on importance of similar visits, which carries messages of affection and honesty between the two countries.

The Kuwaiti delegation includes Secretary of the Kuwaiti Journalists Association Adnan Al-Rashed, Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, KUNA Deputy General Director for the Editorial Department and Chief Editor Saad Al-Ali and Chief Editor of Al-Nahar newspaper Emad Bu Khamseen. — KUNA



Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan meets Iraqi Defense Minister Irfan Al-Hayali.



Iraqi Deputy Speaker Hamam Hamoudi receives the Kuwaiti media delegation.

An adventurer's inspiring Arabian journey



(Top) A scene from a popular market in Muscat dating back to the 19th century shows a group of people examining a sword before buying it. (Center) The famous sacred wild fig tree in Korna in southern Iraq seen in 1868, being pointed out by the natives to all visitors. The tree is around 6,000 years old, and locals believe that it belonged to Prophet Adam (PBUH). People usually come to it to seek blessings. (Above) After lunch in a Baghdad café in 1868, locals in traditional clothes smoke shisha and watch some dogs sleeping near them.

The images are by the American adventurer A Locher during his trip from Bombay to France via the Arabian Peninsula. The purpose of the trip was to buy some Arabian horses for Napoleon III. Locher recorded his trip in his famous book "With Star and Crescent" published in 1890 in Philadelphia. The trip was inspiring for many researchers as it contains wonderful stories, legends and myths about the ancient East with all its secrets.

Prepared by: Mahmoud Zakaria Abu Alella, researcher in heritage at the ministry of information

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Local

Investing in creativity to make a social impact

Nuqat's 'human capital' forum concludes

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

KUWAIT: Nuqat's 'The Human Capital' forum concluded yesterday at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, with talks of investing in creativity for a social impact. Businessman Mohammed Jaafar, CEO of Faith Capital, spoke about ethical business and how to maintain passion in the team and the family spirit by rewarding them with a percentage of the company's profits. "I call upon the owners of institutions to learn from successful global models in the field to maintain the spirit of teamwork. It is not wrong to copy the ways of others, and preserve the pride of Arab and Islamic identity," said Jaafar.

Designer Farah Al-Humaidhi said entrepreneurs should plan and work on diversifying sources of income from fields that fall under the umbrella of creativity, citing Martha Stewart and other local examples. The two lectures were followed by a panel discussion, conducted by EN-V, which tackled the appropriate conditions for civil organizations in the Arab world, which prepares them to

research and engage in social work in order to influence decision-makers and bring about change. This year's conference has focused on measuring the impact of innovation on society in Kuwait and neighboring regions to drive the economy, considering human development first after profit incentives. Entrepreneurs must bear in mind that material profit should not be the sole end.

On the cultural level, curator Munira Sayegh spoke about the emergence and development of the current cultural trend in the Gulf and the importance of critical thinking. She also presented a proposal on how to push the Arab world to build a structure that matches the identity of its societies to integrate with the world. This rapid development, on the other hand, leads to competition between institutions or cities to attract and retain talent, said Ahmed Taleb, regional partner of Interstate Craft Partners.

In a second panel discussion by HIKMA, participants stressed the importance of critical thinking for a sustainable future in the region. This was followed by a lecture in which Rana Al-Khalid, a



KUWAIT: A session is in progress at Nuqat's 'The Human Capital' forum yesterday.

co-founder and mentor of the Proteges, asked whether we should focus on a more developed sense of personality, and whether it is possible to integrate the desire for interdependence and in-

dependence. After that, three lectures were given by artist Manal Al-Dowayan, human development engineer Eman Rafay and assistant professor of music Dr Ghazi Al-Millifi.

Bridge closed, detour opened



Minister Anas Al-Saleh meets Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The traffic department, in cooperation with the ministry of public works, will close Subhan bridge that leads to the Seventh Ring Road and intersects with King Faisal Road for two days - from today until dawn on Sunday, Jan 28. The traffic department also said a detour will be opened on Fifth Ring Road towards Jahra near Jabriya and Bayan at dawn tomorrow (Jan 27). The department urged motorists to be cautious and extra vigilant.

Saleh hails firemen

Deputy Premier and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh lauded the efforts of firemen and their sacrifices during a visit he paid to the Kuwait Fire Services Directorate's headquarters. He was received by the Director General of the Directorate Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad and his deputies.

2 drivers allowed for each truck of small enterprises

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Acting Director General of the Public Authority for Manpower Ahmad Al-Moussa issued an administrative circular that allows small business owners in the field of logistics and goods transportation to have two drivers for each vehicle of a minimum weight of three tons, financed by the small businesses portfolio at Kuwait Industrial Bank or the national fund for care and development of small and medium size projects.

Lowest offer

Kuwait Systems General Trading and Construction Co made the lowest offer of KD 13.8 million for road construction in South Ratqa in northern Kuwait near the Iraqi border. An informed source said concerned authorities received 12 offers from companies for the project. The estimated budget of the Kuwait Oil Company project is KD 20 million.

Kuwait climbs 52 spots on EPI

KUWAIT: Kuwait surged 52 spots on the Environmental Performance Index to reach 61st out of 180 countries, the Environment Public Authority said on Wednesday, hailing the progress as a "qualitative leap". According to the new assessment, Kuwait recorded the "second highest score in the Gulf and Arab regions," EPA Director General and Chairman Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said in a statement. The index is a joint effort between Yale University and Columbia University in collaboration with the World Economic Forum. On its website, the EPI, which measures environmental health and ecosystem vitality over several performance indicators, said the improvement was due to the "establishment of areas protecting biodiversity and habitat." — KUNA

CRIMES

Man goes berserk

KUWAIT: A citizen was sent to the psychiatric hospital after he caused havoc at a co-op and beat an elderly woman, then smashed the windowpanes of a barber shop and beat workers there. The man was arrested and the elderly woman who sustained injuries lodged a complaint against him.

Liquor stash found

Policemen discovered 1,634 liquor bottles stashed by two Asians under the floor of a "bachelor" residence in Hasawi. Police saw a man carrying some bags, who started running, so they pursued him into the house. Another Asian was found there, and both were arrested.

'Stoned' driver

An Egyptian collided with a tree in Farwaniya, then fell asleep in the car, until police saw it and arrested him with drugs. Police first thought the man was unconscious as his car was hugging the tree, to they called paramedics. When they were trying to get him out of the car, he woke up and told them he was in good health. A security source noticed some cigarettes on the seat, so he confessed he was smoking hashish and lost control over the car. He said he decided to stay in the car so that it wouldn't be towed away.

Multiple arrests

Two citizens were found using hashish in the parking lot of a Jahra school. The two are ex-convicts, and a quantity of hashish was found with him. Both were sent to concerned authorities for further legal action. Separately, two bedoons and a female citizen were arrested and taken to Sulaibiya police station as one of them was found wanted for criminal detectives. The three were arrested when they attempted to escape in the car they were in, and the passenger and woman were in an abnormal condition.

Local

Jarallah meets Saudi envoy over remarks on Roudhan

Expats appreciated • Iraq resumes paying war damages

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said he reviewed the sisterly relationship between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia during his meeting with Saudi Ambassador Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez. "We expressed regret over the offending remarks on (Kuwait's) respectable Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan who is held in high esteem by everybody," Jarallah said. "We strongly reject such offending comments that could tamper with the close and distinguished ties between the two countries. We are confident that the brothers in Saudi Arabia are similarly keen on maintaining these ties," he told reporters during a reception held on Wednesday by the Indian Embassy in Kuwait to celebrate the Republic Day of India. Jarallah added that the talks with Fayez were positive and constructive.

Expat workers

Meanwhile, Jarallah said expatriate workers in Kuwait enjoy care and appreciation. The affairs relating to their stay and work contracts are governed by the relevant rules of law, he told reporters. Citing the annual review reports that praise Kuwait's human right records, he said the country addresses the issues of foreign expats in

"a candid and transparent way that preserves their rights" as per the provisions of law.

"These issues as well as the recent incident do not affect the country's humanitarian fame," Jarallah told reporters. "The huge expatriate community in Kuwait, including nearly 276,000 from the Philippines, testifies to the care and stability enjoyed by the expats. Filipino workers enjoy comfortable conditions that guarantee their rights regardless of the recent unjustifiable fuss," he pointed out.

On behalf of Kuwait, Jarallah expressed regret over the comments recently made by President of the Philippines Rodrigo Duterte over Filipino workers in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry made its point clear to the Filipino authorities regarding the reported cases and demanded evidence of any cases, but they failed to produce any, Jarallah revealed. Asked whether Kuwait plans to amend the provisions of the labor law, particularly those relating to domestic workers, Jarallah said the current law is modern and has won praise of competent international organizations. He affirmed that the countries that have large expatriate communities in Kuwait were informed that their nationals are held in high esteem and enjoy care and

respect. He ruled out any plans to suspend the residencies of any Filipino workers.

Iraqi damages

Jarallah also said the Iraqi government resumed paying compensations to Kuwait relating to the 1990 invasion. Iraq started a month ago paying the installments of the compensations agreed with Kuwait under auspices of the United Nations Compensation Commission, he said. The payments will continue until 2021, Jarallah told reporters. On the property of Kuwaiti citizens in Iraq, he said contacts are underway with the Iraqi authorities to enable the Kuwaitis to restore these properties. Iraq was forced to stop paying the installments of the compensations to Kuwait in 2014 due to the security challenges that added strains on the state budget.

Jarallah also lauded as responsive the approach of the Iranian authorities to Kuwait's demand for releasing Faleh Al-Azmi, a Kuwaiti national detained in Iran. "During my meeting with Iran Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Ali Reza Enayati yesterday, I felt a responsive attitude towards solving this issue as early as possible," Jarallah said. "Ambassador Enayati affirmed that the



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (center), Indian Ambassador K Jeeva Sagar and Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Abdou Lahad Mbacke jointly cut the cake to celebrate India's 69th Republic Day on Wednesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Iranian authorities are serious in addressing this issue," he told reporters. The Kuwaiti citizen was arrested in last September for entering into a prohibited area in Iran by mistake while coming from Turkey. — KUNA

Defense minister attends officers' graduation ceremony in Qatar

DOHA: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation yesterday attended the graduation ceremony of a new batch of students of Qatar's Ahmad Bin Mohammad Military College.

The graduated batch includes 17 Kuwaiti officers. Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah's participation in the graduation ceremony, which was patronized and attended by Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, is part of his two-day official visit to Doha at the invitation of the Qatari Emir. Addressing the Kuwaiti officers, Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah said the participation reflected deep relations among GCC member states and everyone's keenness on promoting and developing them in various fields. He wished them best of luck after graduation, urging them to join more training courses.

He also hoped that the new graduates would be able to effectively serve their nation under the wise leadership of HH the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh



DOHA: Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani and First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attend a graduation ceremony of officers. — KUNA

Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The Kuwaiti officers' registration at the college is part of a bilateral military cooperation protocol between Kuwait and Qatar with a view to sharing information and acquiring more experience. The graduation ceremony

was attended by several Kuwaiti high-ranking officers. On Wednesday, Sheikh Tamim received Sheikh Nasser at his office in Al-Bahr Palace. The Kuwaiti official relayed the greetings of HH the Amir of Kuwait to his Qatari counterpart and stressed the depth of bilateral ties. — KUNA

Kuwait national days campaign underway

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri yesterday launched the 2018 media campaign for national festivals and anniversaries themed "sagacious leader and faithful people". Jabri, also chairman of the permanent committee for celebrating national anniversaries, addressed his heartfelt wishes to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on the occasion.

The campaign logo affirms the Kuwaiti people's pride of wisdom characterizing HH the Amir at crucial times that necessitate stances on internal and external affairs, thus bolstering Kuwait status at various levels, the minister said. Kuwait as a free and independent state effectively contributes to efforts for solidifying global security and peace, he says, also underscoring its distinctive role at the humanitarian level, as it has been affirmed by the United Nations when it has designated HH the Amir as the Humanitarian Leader, also naming Kuwait as a Humanitarian Center.

Manifestations of jubilation expressed by the people during the national occasions show to the world the Kuwaitis' adherence to the solid national unity. The permanent committee is planning to promote national values during all festivities marking the glorious 57th National Day, the 27th Liberation Day, the 12th anniversary of the Amir's crowning as well the designation of Sheikh Nawaf as Crown Prince, Jabri added.

He called for boosting citizenship values, amid a tolerant and cordial atmosphere, placing the country interests above any other consideration. This year's celebrations coincide with rapid regional and international events, he said, urging young citizens to follow steps of the forefathers so Kuwait may remain an oasis of security, safety and stability. He called for serious national acts to develop Kuwait on national faithfulness, compassion, tolerance and renunciation of fanaticism - such foundations are necessary to bolster Kuwait as a modern state. — KUNA



Mohammad Al-Jabri

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Three dead as packed Italy commuter train derails

US aircraft carrier to make visit to Vietnam

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KILIS: Turkish-backed Syrian rebel fighters are seen in the area of the Barsaya Hill, which overlooks both the Syrian town of Azaz, which is held by pro-Ankara rebels, and the Turkish town of Kilis just across the border, on Wednesday. — AFP

Syria Kurds dig in their heels

UN hosts 'critical' Syria peace talks in Vienna

JANDAIRIS, Syria: His house was damaged by Turkish bombardment and most neighbors have fled, but elderly Abu Jiwan says he refuses to abandon his northern Syrian hometown as long as he's still breathing. With a traditional red-and-white Kurdish shawl wrapped around his head, the 70-year-old gestured towards his home in the town of Jandairis, freshly hit by Turkish shelling.

"I won't leave Jandairis as long as I'm alive," he said in Kurdish.

"Where would I go? There are no roads. We don't have diesel or a car. Where can we go when all the roads around us are cut?" Turkish forces and allied Syrian rebels are waging an offensive against Afrin, an enclave in northern Syria controlled by Kurdish militia.

For nearly a week, Turkey has launched air strikes, rockets and artillery fire at Afrin in a bid to oust the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). Jandairis, a town in the district's southwestern corner, has been heavily targeted by Turkish air strikes and rockets as it sits close to the border and near a front line with pro-Ankara rebels. Bombing on Wednesday battered Jandairis, leaving Abu

Jiwan's home and his farming tractor in ruins. "God help us. God be kind to us," he said, shaking his head.

'We are all with you'

Rubble is piled up in many of Jandairis's streets and the town's petrol station has been bombed out of service. The United Nations said it has received reports that around 5,000 people have been displaced by the ongoing offensive, mostly within the enclave. Most of Jandairis's residents have sought refuge elsewhere, but those that could not find a way out are taking cover from Turkish bombing however they can. A journalist contributing to AFP saw more than two dozen people, including children, waiting out the shelling in a dimly lit cellar.

The United Nations embarked on fresh efforts yesterday to jump-start Syrian peace talks that Western countries and the opposition fear are being undermined by a separate Russian diplomatic push. The two days of talks in Vienna come after eight previous rounds in Geneva, during which the two sides failed to even meet each other. The pre-

vious attempts stumbled in particular over the fate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, with the government delegation refusing to meet the opposition face-to-face until they drop demands that he leaves office. The Syrian government's top negotiator Bashar Al-Jaafari made no comment as he arrived at the UN in Vienna to meet the world body's special envoy Staffan de Mistura. The main opposition group, the Syrian Negotiations Commission (SNC), said it would sit down for separate talks with the envoy at 4:00 pm (1500 GMT). De Mistura said on Wednesday that the negotiations came at a "very, very critical moment".

Nasr al-Hariri from the SNC said the discussions would be "a real test for all the sides". French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said meanwhile in Paris that the talks were the "last hope" for reaching a political solution to a seven-year conflict that has claimed more than 340,000 lives.

He highlighted a "considerable worsening of the humanitarian situation" in Afrin—where Turkey has launched an operation against Kurdish fighters—as well as in Idlib and Eastern Ghouta.

The Turkish intervention, its second in a conflict that has drawn in multiple world powers, has heightened tensions with Ankara's NATO ally the United States, which has backed the Kurdish militants in their battle against the Islamic State group.—Agencies



**Russia
under
pressure**

International

Three dead as packed Italy commuter train derails

Rescuers spend morning searching wreckage for victims

MILAN: At least three people were killed and about 12 seriously injured after a packed Italian commuter train derailed yesterday near the northern city of Milan. Italian media quoted witnesses as saying that the regional train began to shake heavily as if it was travelling over rocks, before braking suddenly and derailling. Some people were trapped for hours in the wreckage as firefighters, police and rescue workers took care of the traumatized passengers and tried to clear the carriages, one of which jack-knifed across the track after the train struck a pylon, bent almost at a right angle.

According to Italian media the three victims were women aged 39, 51 and 61. "People were scared, they were shouting 'my God, my god, my god'. I managed to climb out of a window after the carriage went onto its side," John Eugaosa, a 25-year-old Nigerian living in Milan for work, told AFP. His trousers stained with the blood of other passengers, he was waiting to see a doctor in one of the more than 90 people who sustained light injuries.

'The train was full'

"Unfortunately the train was full, and if the current toll ends up staying as it is it would almost be a miracle. The train was packed with commuters and students," said Milan's police commissioner Marcello Cardona. The cause of the crash was not immediately clear. Milan prosecutors have opened a probe, and investigators have begun questioning the driver, Italian media said. Rescuers spent the morning searching the

wreckage for victims and firefighters said a dozen people were seriously injured, including five in a life-threatening condition.

According to regional emergency services in Milan, another 100 people sustained light injuries in the incident, which took place at around 7 am (0600 GMT) near Segrate in Milan's northeastern suburbs. The derailment is the most serious rail accident in Italy since 23 people were killed in a high-speed head-on collision between two passenger trains in July 2016 in the southern Puglia region.

'Mummy, help!'

One woman told the newspaper *La Repubblica* that her daughter had called her on her phone to say "Mummy, help, the train is derailling" as the accident happened. Pictures issued by the Italian fire service showed at least one passenger stuck in his seat, closed in by the wreckage. Firefighters were seen carrying victims into a waiting helicopter. The regional train was travelling between the town of Cremona and Italy's business and finance capital.

"We are investigating the dynamics of the incident, the rail structure... everything has to be checked piece by piece," Cardona said. An official from Rete Ferroviaria Italiana (RFI), which manages the rail network, said that one of the potential causes of the incident could be a 20-centimetre rupture in the track, but that it was still working to establish whether that was "the cause or a consequence of the incident".

"There was either a problem with the tracks or the train's bogie (structure)," said Dario Bar-



MILAN: Italian rescuers, police and firefighters work on the site of a train derailment yesterday near Milan. — AFP

lotta, a representative of Italy's National Public Transport Observatory. The six-carriage train belonged to the Lombardy regional rail company Trenord, which is owned equally by the public company Trenitalia and Ferrovie Nord Milano and operates principally in the north of Italy. Trenord informed passengers at 8 am of the interruption to services due to a "technical

problem", sparking sharp criticism on social media. "In recent years we have invested more in high-speed trains and the main lines than in the network that should take people to work every day," said Cattaneo Raffaele, president of the Lombardy regional council. "There needs to be political attention on the need to invest more in suburban rail travel." — AFP

South Sudan ceasefire body slam leaders for breaking deal

JUBA: An internationally backed ceasefire monitoring team in South Sudan said it has asked the UN Security Council to say whether leaders violating a peace treaty should face asset freezes, regional travel bans, or an arms embargo. The statement comes a day after Nikki Haley, the US ambassador to the United Nations, urged the body to impose an arms embargo and spoke of growing international frustration with the South Sudanese government.

South Sudan has been riven by civil war since 2013 after clashes between troops loyal to former vice president Riek Machar and President Salva Kiir. The fighting took on ethnic overtones, killing tens of thousands of people, causing widespread hunger and forced a third of the population to flee.

The ceasefire monitoring commission, chaired by former Botswana president Festus Mogae, is supposed to oversee a largely ignored 2015 peace deal. Both sides have repeatedly violated it. A ceasefire negotiated in December was violated within hours, the monitors have said.

"We cannot stand by as South Sudanese leaders sign an

agreement one day and authorize or allow its violation with impunity the next," Mogae said in the statement on Thursday after addressing the UN Security Council via videolink from Juba. South Sudan's government spokesman Michael Makuei Lueth told Reuters yesterday that the ceasefire monitors were unfair and relied on second-hand information. "This is very unfortunate and it is a misleading report and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) should not have listened to such report," he said. "They are working hard to weaken the government so that the rebels become stronger and they take over." Rebel deputy spokesman Lam Paul Gabriel said they would welcome any intervention by the international community to enforce the tattered ceasefire.

"We welcome his idea to make sure those who violated the ceasefire are held responsible," he said. "We need proper investigations to find out who is responsible for the violation of the ceasefire this time." Haley had warned bluntly that the administration was running out of patience with South Sudan's leaders. "Things are going backwards in South Sudan," she said, noting that despite promises from Kiir, aid workers still faced huge fees and restrictions and that the government had promoted three generals sanctioned for severe human rights abuses.

"The time has come to acknowledge the hard reality that the leaders of South Sudan are not just failing their people, they are betraying them," she said. "It's long past time that the Security Council establish an arms embargo on South Sudan." — Reuters

Landmine kills 13 civilians in Mali

BAMAKO: Thirteen civilians travelling from Burkina Faso were killed yesterday when their vehicle ran over a landmine in central Mali, local officials and a security source said, giving a provisional toll. "Thirteen Malian and Burkinabe civilians were killed near the town of Boni when their vehicle struck a mine," local official Mahmoud Traore told AFP, as a Malian security source blamed "terrorists" for the blast.

"Terrorists uses these mines to spread fear," the source said, adding that the victims of yesterday's blast were killed instantly. Those wounded are in a "critical" condition, according to the source.

Another unnamed local official said that the vehicle was carrying seven traders from Burkina Faso as well as Malians travelling to a weekly market. Witnesses said police, military and emergency services were all on scene. In November, five civilians including a teenage girl were killed when the bus they were travelling on struck a mine. No group claimed responsibility for that incident. — AFP

International

43,000 Cameroonian refugees flee to Nigeria

ONITSHA, Nigeria: More than 43,000 Cameroonians have fled as refugees to Nigeria to escape a crackdown by the government on Anglophone separatists, local aid officials said yesterday.

The figure is almost three times as high as that given by the United Nations and Nigerian officials two weeks ago. Cameroon is a majority French-speaking country but two southwestern regions bordering Nigeria are Anglophone. Last October, separatists declared independence for a state they want to create called Ambazonia, sparking a military crackdown by the government of President Paul Biya. In Nigeria's Cross River state, which borders southwest Cameroon, more than 33,000 Cameroonians have taken refuge from violence, John Inaku, director general of the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA), told Reuters by phone. In neighboring Benue state, there are 10,216 refugees, said Emmanuel Shior, director general of the regional SEMA. Earlier this month, the UN refugee agency had said more than 8,000 refugees were in Cross River state.

Explaining the disparity, Inaku told Reuters the UN agency was only registering people in Cross River coming in through conventional routes. "This is a war situation and refugees are trooping in by the minute through the bush

paths, rivers and every other unconventional routes open to them," he said. "During our advocacy to our border communities we told them to allow the refugees in and not be hostile to them so our communities have been receiving them warmly and accommodating them. These are very remote areas, hard to reach without good roads," Inaku said. Inaku said community facilities were becoming overstretched and so people were getting hostile towards the refugees, who were in "deplorable condition", hungry and in need of medicine.

The Benue SEMA director general said the agency had also had difficulty counting refugees because they were in remote areas. Early yesterday, gunmen crossed from Nigeria to attack a border post in Cameroon's southwest, security force witnesses said, with the incident likely to further damage relations between the neighbors. The separatists pose the biggest challenge yet to the 35-year rule of Biya, who will seek re-election this year. The conflict is also fuelling tensions between Nigeria and Cameroon.

Cameroonian military officials and pro-government media accuse Nigeria of sheltering the insurgents, who since last year have waged a guerrilla campaign to establish an independent homeland for Cameroon's English-speaking minority. — Reuters

Trump's Jerusalem move boosts Palestinian support for 'armed struggle': Poll

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital led to a spike in Palestinian support for "armed struggle", a poll suggested yesterday. Nearly twice as many Palestinians said they supported "armed struggle" against Israel compared with an identical survey six months previously, while there was also a fall in support for the two-state solution, the joint Israeli and Palestinian poll found. The poll of 1,270 Palestinians across east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza was conducted in the days after Trump's December 6 declaration that he would move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and recognize the city as Israel's capital. Palestinians see at least the east of the city as the capital of their future state, and the announcement set off street protests and diplomatic fury. Given four options for their preference for the next step for Palestinian-Israeli relations, 38.4 percent of Palestinians favored waging an armed struggle, the most popular single answer and compared with only 26.2 percent who called for reaching a peace agreement.—AFP



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International

Turkey, Austria seek 'new page' despite row on EU

Austrian foreign minister holds talks in Istanbul

ISTANBUL: Turkey and Austria yesterday vowed to work to improve relations battered by the opposition of the new conservative far-right Austrian government coalition to Ankara ever joining the European Union. Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl held talks in Istanbul with Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu, in the first high-level contact between the two sides since the new Austrian government came to power.

Cavusoglu said that the two sides had had a "sincere" exchange and discussed "how we can open a new page in relations". The Austrian minister added that the talks had "exceeded expectations" even though "there are many points where we have differences". December's landmark coalition deal, marking the return to power in Austria of the Freedom Party (FPÖ), has sparked ripples of concern throughout Europe after a year of successes for far-right movements.

Chancellor Sebastian Kurz of the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), already has a deeply-fractious relationship with Ankara due to his staunch opposition to Turkey's EU bid.

Kneissl, a multi-lingual career diplomat, is not a member of the FPÖ but shares many of its views, talking tough on immigration and the Eu-

ropean Union. Her government's program pledged Vienna would not agree to Ankara joining the EU, prompting the Turkish foreign ministry to blast a "baseless and short-sighted" approach.

Kneissl indicated there was no chance of Austria shifting its policy. "Austria's attitude on (Turkey's EU) membership is well known. We are mainly concerned with improving the atmosphere in the relationship." Turkey's over half century ambition to join the EU has hit the buffers as the bloc sounded the alarm over the crack-down that followed the 2016 coup bid aimed at ousting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

But Ankara has this year signalled a willingness to improve ties with member states, with Erdogan visiting Paris and Cavusoglu making a key fence-mending visit to Germany. "We want to improve relations with the whole world," said Cavusoglu, whose government is facing new controversy over an operation against Kurdish militia in Syria. He stressed that Turkey's problems with the EU were not just about Austria. "The EU needs to take decision, not just Austria. We don't want that the EU keeps us waiting at the door, we have been standing there for 60 years," he said. — AFP



ISTANBUL: Austrian Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl (L) and her Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu exchange gifts yesterday during their meeting in Istanbul in the first high-level contact between the two countries since the new Austrian government came to power. — AFP

South African enquiry can probe Guptas in fresh blow to Zuma

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's President Jacob Zuma said yesterday a judicial enquiry could investigate allegations of influence peddling by his friends the Gupta brothers, in an apparent fresh sign of his waning power. The announcement is a blow to Zuma because he went to court in an attempt to thwart the investigation.

The enquiry will look at whether the three brothers offered cabinet positions to former deputy finance minister Mcebisi Jonas and former lawmaker Vytjie Mentor, according to the government gazette. It will also examine whether Zuma or any member of government facilitated the unlawful awarding of tender contracts that benefited the Guptas. Zuma and the Guptas deny wrongdoing and say they are victims of a witch hunt.

"I hereby appoint a Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of state capture, corruption and fraud in the public sector," said the order signed by Zuma.

Zuma became president in 2009 and is set to serve until his second term ends next year, but the ruling African National Congress says it is deciding whether to cut short his tenure in favor of its new leader Cyril Ramaphosa. Ramaphosa, who is South Africa's deputy president, is in pole position to win next year's election. He has pledged to combat corruption and some party officials say he would boost the ANC's electoral chances were he to take the reins early. Zuma was under pressure to release the terms of reference for the enquiry after the judge overseeing it said earlier this week he could not start without them. — Reuters

5-Star most popular party ahead of Italy's March 4 election

ROME: When parliamentarians from Italy's "anti-establishment" 5-Star Movement sat down for a closed-door meeting with international banks and hedge funds in November, they feared the encounter was going to be awkward. The concern was understandable. 5-Star has more friends among the unemployed than among bankers and has often decried the sway of high finance. Yet Carla Ruocco, a lower house lawmaker, said she was pleasantly surprised.

"There were three of us and about 20 of them sat in a circle, she said. "I expected some prejudice but they seemed open-minded and interested. They mainly asked about the euro and how we would help bring stability after the election."

The meeting in Rome was part of efforts by Italy's most popular party to reassure markets and investors that it can be trusted with power. It also reflected how much 5-Star has changed since it started in 2009 as an angry protest movement.

On the euro, the investors probably liked what they heard. 5-Star has steadily rowed back on an early plan to hold a referendum on whether Italy should leave the common currency zone, and this month its new, moderate leader Luigi Di Maio said it was no longer a party policy.

Founded by the foul-mouthed comedian Beppe Grillo, who vowed to sweep away Italy's cronyistic ruling class, 5-Star presents a far less threatening face under the young, dapper Di Maio as it bids for power in national elections on March 4. Grillo has retreated from the limelight and this month an-

nounced his popular blog was no longer 5-Star's official mouthpiece. The move raised speculation he was disowning his creation, which Grillo forcefully denied.

Since he was elected leader of the party and its candidate for prime minister in September, Di Maio, 31, has been meeting with bankers, businessmen, foreign diplomats and members of the Catholic church to try to assuage their concerns.

He has also shifted 5-Star's policies, scrapping not only the euro referendum but also its long-standing refusal to govern with traditional parties. So far, the voters have followed him. Helped by a split in the ruling Democratic Party (PD), 5-Star leads the polls with about 28 percent of the vote, five points ahead of the PD. A centre-right alliance of smaller parties, led by Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Go Italy!) totals about 37 percent and is seen winning most parliamentary seats but probably not enough for a working majority.

That could give Di Maio his chance. He says if the centre-right bloc is unable to form a government and 5-Star is the largest party, President Sergio Mattarella must give him a mandate to try to win cross-party support for his program.

That includes "drastic" cuts to corporate taxes and slashing red tape, as well as 5-Star's flagship policy of guaranteeing a minimum income of up to 780 euros for the poor.

"More acceptable"

Di Maio's makeover has not gone unnoticed. "They are seen as more acceptable since they rowed back on the euro referendum. That was the real no-go for markets," said Gilles Guibout, who helps manage 730 billion euros (\$904 billion) at AXA IM in Paris.

Bankers who have met with 5-Star gave contrasting reports. A London-based equity analyst with one of the world's largest investment banks who attended the meeting in Rome said he got "an impression of decent, reasonable people".

"Considering we were meeting politicians not economists, they were well-informed, I'd say better-informed than politicians from some other parties I have met," he said. — Reuters

International

Somali forces kill boys in anti-Shabaab operation

US forces go in advisory capacity with Somali partners

WASHINGTON: US forces operating in Somalia took part in a mission in which their Somali counterparts killed fighters who appeared to be under 18, the US military's Africa Command said Wednesday.

On January 18, US forces went in an advisory capacity with Somali partners on a mission in the Lower Shabelle region to an indoctrination center for the Al-Qaeda-affiliated Shabaab group.

"During the mission, the Somali National Security Forces received hostile fire," AFRICOM said in a statement. "The Somali forces returned fire in self-defense."

In the ensuing firefight, five "enemy combatants" were killed and six were wounded.

Some of those killed appear to have

been under the age of 18, AFRICOM said, without providing additional details.

At the end of the operation, Somali forces recovered 30 "male children" from the indoctrination center. "We support the Federal Government of Somalia and UNICEF efforts to reunite these children with their families," the statement read.

Officials said US soldiers did not fire their weapons in the engagement. Al-Shabaab have been trying since 2007 to overthrow the Somali government, which has the support of the international community. The group proclaimed its allegiance to Al-Qaeda in 2010, a step formally accepted by the extremist network two years later. However in recent years, some Shabaab members have defected to IS. — AFP



Somali female traders wait for customers yesterday at a livestock market in Garowe at the biggest livestock market in the northern breakaway state of Puntland. — AFP

EU starts countdown to settle refugee quotas row by June

SOFIA: EU ministers stuck yesterday to opposing east-west camps as they started a countdown to try and overhaul Europe's asylum rules by June when the three-year-old migration crisis could flare anew.

The minister from Bulgaria, which holds the six-month rotating EU presidency ending June 30, said he would introduce pro-

posals to "try to find a balance between the member states" split over refugee quotas. "Today we will see if we are on the right track or not," Interior Minister Valentin Radev told reporters as he arrived for talks with his European Union counterparts in the sub-zero temperatures of the snow-covered Bulgarian capital Sofia.

Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia have either refused outright or resisted taking in refugees since the European Commission, the EU executive, first pushed through temporary quotas in 2015 as a way to ease the burden on frontline states Italy and Greece.

The summer of that year saw mass drownings in the Mediterranean at the start of Europe's worst migration crisis since World War II, as hundreds of thousands of people fled war and poverty in the Middle East and elsewhere.

EU leaders meeting in Brussels last month

set a June deadline for an overhaul of the so-called Dublin rules to create a permanent mechanism for all member states to admit refugees in the event of a new emergency.

June is when migrant flows across the Mediterranean tend to increase with the warmer weather. Under existing rules, countries where migrants first arrive are required to process asylum requests, putting a heavy burden on Greece and Italy, the current main entry points to Europe. Little, if any progress has been made since talks on asylum reform began in 2016.

EU cooperation deals with Turkey and Libya, the main transit countries, have helped to slow, at least for now, the flow of migrants to Europe since its 2015 peak. But European Migration Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos warned that the crisis could flare anew at many points along the EU's external borders and all member states have to share the burden of admitting refugees. — AFP

French lawmakers banned from wearing religious symbols

PARIS: France's parliament has banned lawmakers from wearing any religious symbols under a new "neutral" dress code, an extension of the country's strict secular rules that is seen as going too far by some critics. Under the change approved late Wednesday, members of the National Assembly must avoid "the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols, uniforms, logos or commercial messages or political slogans." The regulation was brought in following an outcry over an MP wearing a football shirt in the parliament, but the inclusion of religious symbols in the new rules quickly became a talking point and a focus of attention. Until now, lawmakers were instructed to simply "respect the institution", which generally meant women wearing smart clothes and men sporting a suit and tie, though this latter requirement was relaxed last year.

Some 20th-century lawmakers included priests in religious garb,

such as Henri Groues, better known as Abbe Pierre, and several Christian faith leaders were critical of the new restrictions on Wednesday.

The head of the Protestant Federation of France, Francois Clavairoly, said the change had been made "in the spirit of obsessive radical secularism." The speaker of the parliament, Francois de Rugy, defended the changes, saying they were in line with a 2004 law that banned schoolchildren and teachers from wearing conspicuous religious symbols. That was seen by critics as penalizing Muslims in particular by banning headscarves and veils, but Jewish kippas were also covered by the regulations. "We're adopting a framework and limits... to avoid any sort of provocation," de Rugy said.

Schoolchildren, teachers-and now lawmakers-are allowed to wear small Christian crosses around their necks, while Jews are permitted to wear a Star of David and Muslims can carry a Hamsa amulet. The laws and rules are intended to underline France's commitment to the principle of secularism-the separation of church and state-which was enshrined in a flagship 1905 law.

Some politicians support extending the ban on religious symbols to universities and even to the workplace, while some see secularism as camouflage for an Islamophobic campaign against the veil. Lawmakers will be allowed to deviate from the new dress rules if they can justify their appearance as traditional clothing, however. — AFP

EU court rejects refugee sexuality tests

LUXEMBOURG: The EU's top court yesterday ruled that psychological tests to determine sexuality are illegal for asylum seekers fleeing countries where homosexuality is illegal.

The ruling involved a Nigerian man subjected to tests by Hungarian authorities, which the court said had interfered unduly in his private life. "An asylum seeker may not be subjected to a psychological test in order to determine his sexual orientation," the European Court of Justice said.

"The performance of such a test amounts to a disproportionate interference in the private life of the asylum seeker," added the Luxembourg-based court. The asylum seeker had applied to Hungarian authorities for asylum in April 2015 saying he feared persecution because of his homosexuality.

Homosexuality is illegal in religiously conservative Nigeria and further laws against gay marriage and same-sex unions were passed in 2014.

Hungarian authorities rejected his application after a psychologist's expert report they had commissioned did not confirm his alleged sexual orientation, the court said.

The refugee took the issue to the Hungarian courts, saying the tests "seriously prejudiced his fundamental rights" and could not assess his sexuality in any case. The EU court ruled that states can order expert reports to help determine their need for protection but that they must respect European rights laws. It found that the impact of sexuality tests were "disproportionate", adding that "such interference is particularly serious because it is intended to give an insight into the most intimate aspects of the asylum seeker's life."

Hungary rightwing government is a fierce opponent of mass migration and has rejected compulsory refugee quotas imposed by the European Union. — AFP

International

Syrians with temporary American protection brace for Trump decision

TPS for Syrians will expire March end

WASHINGTON: Targeted by the Syrian government after providing humanitarian supplies to civilians fleeing air strikes, Mohammad Alala and his wife escaped in 2012, eventually obtaining student visas to enter the United States. They received a form of temporary protected status (TPS) extended to Syrians in the United States because of Syria's civil war. After moving to Florida, Alala found work as an engineer and his wife, Dania Kassas, enrolled in graduate school.

Now, the couple's ability to remain in the United States legally is uncertain. Their asylum claims are unresolved and TPS for Syrians will expire at the end of March unless the Department of Homeland Security decides to extend it. The decision, due by Jan. 30, will affect some 6,000 Syrians. If their status is withdrawn, they could lose the ability to work in the United States and face possible deportation back to Syria, where the war rages into a seventh year.

President Donald Trump's administration has demonstrated deep skepticism toward TPS, a program established by Congress in 1990 to

provide temporary reprieve for immigrants whose home countries face disaster or conflict.

Since Trump took office, DHS has announced an end to protections for immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua and Sudan. It has extended the protection for South Sudanese, and deferred a decision on Hondurans to later this year.

Administration officials have criticized previous presidents for leaving the status in place long after the crises that prompted it were over. Stephen Yale-Loehr, a law professor at Cornell University, said the decision on Syria could indicate whether the administration dislikes the entire concept of TPS or simply thinks it was too leniently renewed in the past.

"If the administration wants to make it known that they are considering whether to extend TPS on a case-by-case basis, Syria presents a much clearer case why it should be extended," Yale-Loehr said. If they rescind the protection for Syrians, "then it signals that they think the concept and philosophy of TPS is unwarranted." A DHS spokesman said the

administration has not made a decision on Syria's TPS, which was put in place in 2012, the year after the war began.

Some groups traditionally critical of the program are holding back in Syria's case. Roy Beck, president of Numbers USA, which favors immigration restrictions, said the group has not taken an official position on whether TPS for Syrians should be rescinded. The group supported ending protections for immigrants from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Honduras.

'Dangerous signal'

Alala said he came under suspicion from the government of President Bashar Al-Assad when he refused to participate in pro-government rallies. He also quietly helped families fleeing government air strikes with humanitarian aid. Alala and his family are awaiting a decision on their asylum application, which they made in 2013. In the meantime, he dreads the prospect of being sent back.

"The war is still going on in most of Syria, so it's not safe from my perspective for anyone to go back there," he



KILIS: Mourners gather during the funeral of two people killed by rocket fire in Kilis, a town close to the Syrian border yesterday. — AFP

said. There is widespread agreement that civilians are in grave danger in Syria, a fact acknowledged by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in a speech this month. "Assad has gassed his own people, he has barrel-bombed entire villages and urban neighborhoods,"

Tillerson said. "Those abuses continue to this day." The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees "believes that the conditions for refugees to return in safety and dignity are not yet in place in Syria," said Andrej Mahecic, a UNHCR spokesman. — Reuters

US Senate to hold hearing on Hawaii false missile alert

WASHINGTON: A US Senate panel is holding a hearing yesterday on the false ballistic missile alert sent out by authorities in Hawaii this month that stirred panic in the Pacific island state and prompted calls for reforms to prevent future such incidents. "This was scary," Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune said in an interview. He said he was shocked that a notification for a purported nuclear attack was coming through a state agency.

He said he believed the hearing could produce suggestions and recommendations "for a more streamlined approach about how people get notified" of that type of emergency. "I was shocked how incoherent the whole process seemed." State authorities blamed human error

for the false alarm issued in Hawaii on Jan. 13. The Federal Communications Commission's bureau chief overseeing public safety will testify at the hearing as will a senior vice president at a wireless trade group and the chief technology officer at the National Association of Broadcasters.

In a speech last week, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai said FCC investigators were reviewing why it took 38 minutes for Hawaii to correct the false alert and how to ensure it did not happen again.

"This incident highlights the need for our alerting system to work properly and for alerts to convey accurate information to the public," Pai said. He has said Hawaii apparently did not have adequate safeguards in place and that government officials must work to prevent future incidents.

A US House of Representatives panel also plans a hearing over the alert and the Senate Commerce Committee plans a hearing in Hawaii. To prevent a repeat of the incident, Hawaii's Emergency Management Agency has said it will require two employees to activate the alert system - one to issue the warning and another to confirm it. — Reuters

No safe haven for children as shootings rock US schools

WASHINGTON: With 11 shootings so far this year, US schools once again find themselves vulnerable to spasms of gun violence that authorities seem powerless to prevent. A 15-year-old boy opened fire with a handgun at the start of the school day at a Kentucky high school on Tuesday, killing two students and wounding others. The day before, a teenager was wounded by a shot fired in her school cafeteria in Texas. Also Monday, a bullet grazed a 14-year-old boy in the parking lot of a New Orleans high school. Other recent incidents include shots aimed at a school bus in the state of Iowa, and incidents at a school in Seattle and at a southern California campus.

The Kentucky shooting took place at Marshall County High School in the town of Benton. State police said the dead - a boy and a girl - were both 15 years old.

The suspected shooter was apprehended in a "non-violent" manner and has been charged with two counts of murder and 12 counts of first-degree assault, officials said.

Canada 0, USA 11

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau called

Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin to deliver personal condolences. And Donald Trump followed suit: "I spoke with @GovMattBevin of Kentucky regarding yesterday's shooting at Marshall County High School. My thoughts and prayers are with Bailey Holt, Preston Cope, their families, and all of the wounded victims who are in recovery. We are with you!" he tweeted.

Since January 2013, "there have been at least 283 school shootings across the country - which averages out to one school shooting a week," according to Everytown for Gun Safety, a non-profit group that advocates for gun control. "Zero school shootings in Canada so far this year," tweeted Shannon Watts, founder of Moms Demand Action, a gun control activist group, after the Kentucky shooting.

With each school shooting, an endless debate resumes: Should schools be equipped with security gates? Should teachers carry weapons?

And yet everyone seems to know that the outrage will slam into opposition to gun control from Republican lawmakers, who control both houses of Congress.

Limits to prevention

Long-term trends are cause for concern. An FBI study on "active shooter" incidents between 2000 and 2013 has found "an increasing frequency of incidents annually."

In 70 percent of the cases studied, the shootings took place in five minutes or less - making a police response less effective. In 24 percent of the cases, the shootings took place in educational environments. The shooters who open fire inside schools are in most cases students. The FBI acknowledges that these are often the deadliest shootings. — AFP

International

'Save the Children' Afghan staff huddled in basement

IS battled security forces meters away from compound

JALALABAD, Afghanistan: For nearly 10 hours Kamran Khan and his terrified Save the Children colleagues huddled in the basement of their compound, listening as Islamic State militants battled security forces meters away and praying they would survive. Dozens of men and women working for the British charity dashed to the basement—which Afghans often reinforce as a “safe room” against militant attacks—as the assault began Wednesday, a move which saved their lives.

“I was terrified,” Kamran, 30, told AFP yesterday, a day after the deadly attack that officials said killed five people and wounded another 26. Save the Children said yesterday that four employees had been killed, up from the three previously. “We were stuck in the safe room for almost 10 hours. Some of my colleagues fainted out of fear,” Kamran said.

The ordeal began at 9:00 am (0430 GMT), shortly after staff arrived. Heavily armed militants blew up a car outside the compound before using a rocket-propelled grenade to blast their way inside.

“I was hit with pieces of shrapnel in my head and my leg was also hit by shards of glass—my

head and leg were bleeding,” Mohammad Amin, who had been leaving the compound with a colleague as the attack began, told AFP.

His workmate was killed. “I was terrified... I thought it was the last day of my life. It was chaos everyone was screaming and yelling for help,” said Amin, who escaped by climbing a ladder and hiding in a house next door.

“It was a horrific and gruesome attack. I still don't remember how I survived.” During the ordeal one of the employees hiding in the basement sent a WhatsApp message to a friend begging him to “pray for us”.

“I can hear two attackers on the second floor. They are looking for us. Inform the security forces,” he wrote in the message seen by AFP. AFP could not verify his fate but all those trapped in the basement

are believed to have survived. Even as the attack was underway and its staff still trapped inside the building, Save the Children announced it was suspending operations in Afghanistan—the latest international aid group to downgrade its presence in the war-torn country.

The group described the attack as “a senseless and malicious act of violence” yesterday. “Incidents like this have a direct impact on the

“
They are
looking
for us
”



KABUL: This file photo taken on January 21, 2018 shows Afghan men walking near the Intercontinental Hotel as smoke billows during a fight between gunmen and Afghan security forces in Kabul. — AFP

children and communities we work to protect and yesterday programs across the country were brought to a halt,” a spokesman said. “Our humanitarian staff remain dedicated to resuming operations, and have already taken first steps to do so, carrying out critical safety and security assessments across the areas we work.”

Afghanistan recorded the second highest number of attacks against aid workers worldwide in 2016, according to UK-based research group Humanitarian Outcomes. Only South Sudan was more dangerous. “It was a tragic day, we lost some of our dear colleagues,” said Kamran. “I still cannot believe I survived.” — AFP

Indian murder convict gets prison break to father child

NEW DELHI: An Indian court has freed for two weeks a convicted murder serving a life jail term so that he can try to become a father, his lawyer said yesterday.

Siddique Ali, 40, was freed by the Madras High Court following a plea by his 32-year-old wife so the couple can undergo fertility treatment. The court order, made last week but only revealed yesterday, is a rare judgment in India recognizing prisoners' conjugal rights. The judges said Ali was released under “extraordinary” circumstances for the “purpose of procreation”.

They rejected a prosecution contention that the law does not provide for a prisoner to be freed to start a family. The court order said the wife was “a suffering person” and

“her legitimate expectation to have a child cannot be declined.”

“Being human beings, prisoners also would like to share their problems with their life partner as well as the society. Just because they are termed as prisoner, their right to dignity can't be deprived,” the 11-page judgment said. The justices ordered Ali to return to prison on February 3 but said they would consider additional leave if required.

Ali was convicted two years ago. Details of the murder were not immediately given.

The couple's lawyer said Ali and his wife are consulting fertility specialists. “The doctors are conducting tests and we are hopeful their wish is fulfilled,” the lawyer told AFP on condition of anonymity. The judgment ordered the government to consider allowing conjugal visits for other prisoners.

An Indian court in 2015 ruled conjugal visits and artificial insemination are a fundamental right and said special facilities should be built for married inmates. But such visits are rare in the notoriously overcrowded prisons. Nearly 420,000 inmates were lodged in 1,400 Indian jails with a capacity of 366,000 prisoners, according to the last official figures from 2015. — AFP

US denies hitting Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan drone strike

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's claim that the US hit an Afghan refugee camp in a drone strike is “false”, a US spokesman said yesterday, as tensions between the uneasy allies ratchet higher over Islamabad's alleged support for militants. The drone strike, which took place well inside Pakistani territory on Wednesday, killed a mid-level commander from the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network, local officials and a source close to the Islamist group have told AFP. Pakistan's foreign ministry condemned the “unilateral action” late Wednesday, saying it had targeted an Afghan refugee camp, but made no mention of casualties. “The claim in (a foreign ministry) statement yesterday that US forces struck an Afghan refugee camp in Kurram Agency yesterday is false,” a spokesman for the US embassy in Islamabad said.

Local officials have told AFP that the pre-dawn strike took place more than 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the Afghan border, in the village of Ma-

muzai in Kurram district in Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal region, where militants once operated with impunity. The foreign ministry did not elaborate on the nature of the “refugee camp”.

A spokesman for the UN refugee agency has told AFP there are no refugee camps in the tribal areas, and no sign of a camp can be seen in pictures from the site. Local officials also told AFP they were not aware of a refugee camp in the area.

Pakistani officials doubled down on the claim during a regular foreign office briefing yesterday, with a spokesman insisting there are two camps in the area, and that the drone hit one of them.

“Pakistan condemned the drone strike in Kurram Agency carried out by the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) yesterday, which targeted an Afghan refugee camp,” the spokesman said. “Pakistan has also been stressing the need of early repatriation of Afghan refugees, as their presence in Pakistan helps Afghan terrorists to melt and morph among them.”

Nearly 1.4 million Afghan refugees remain in Pakistan, according to UNHCR figures. Unofficial estimates suggest a further 700,000 undocumented refugees could be in the country. After Washington froze aid to Pakistan worth almost \$2 billion this month, Islamabad set a deadline of January 31 for all the refugees to return to Afghanistan. Such deadlines have been repeatedly extended in the past. The US and Afghanistan have long accused Pakistan of ignoring or even collaborating with groups that attack Afghanistan from havens inside Pakistan, a claim Islamabad denies. — AFP

International

US aircraft carrier to make historic visit to Vietnam

US allies seek to counter Beijing's growing might

HANOI: A US aircraft carrier will port in Vietnam in March, military officials said yesterday, a first for the allies and former foes as they seek to counter Beijing's growing might in the disputed South China Sea.

The announcement came as US defense secretary Jim Mattis visited the communist nation following a stopover in Indonesia on a brief Asia tour aimed at drumming up defense cooperation.

On his two-day trip to Vietnam, where he met with his counterpart Ngo Xuan Lich and President Tran Dai Quang yesterday, Mattis zeroed in on freedom of navigation in the resource-rich South China Sea, a thorny issue between communist neighbors Hanoi and Beijing. China claims most of the waterway—believed to hold vast oil and gas deposits and through which \$5 trillion in trade passes annually—and has built up islands and military installations in the sea.

Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei also have claims in the waterway. Vietnam and US defense officials have submitted requests for the aircraft carrier to visit, according to Vietnam's ministry of defense yesterday.

Mattis thanked Vietnam for the "increasing partnership with our aircraft carrier coming into Danang in March". Though smaller US ships have docked on Vietnamese shores, Mattis spokesman Jeff Davis confirmed it will be the first time a US aircraft carrier will port in Vietnam.

US aircraft carriers neared Vietnamese shores during the Vietnam War which ended in 1975, but this will be the first time for a carrier to port in the country, Pentagon officials said.

Mattis said earlier that freedom of navigation in the sea was crucial for fast-growing Vietnam. "Freedom of navigation and access in the South China Sea will be critical to them economically, of course, and their security efforts," he told reporters en route to Vietnam from Indonesia on Wednesday.

Military ties between the former foes have improved in recent years. In 2016 former US President Barack Obama, on a visit to the one-party state, lifted an arms embargo in place since the end of the Vietnam War. Vietnam's Defence Minister Ngo Xuan Lich visited Mattis in August 2017, part of Hanoi's campaign to keep Washing-



HANOI: US Secretary of Defense James Mattis (right) and Vietnam's Defence Minister Ngo Xuan Lich (center) arrive for official talks at the Ministry of Defence in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP

ton close under US President Donald Trump.

Mattis, who is in Vietnam for the first time, heads back to the US today, capping a five-day

trip to the region that included a memorable military performance in Indonesia involving snake sacrifice and flaming bricks. — AFP

Hundreds of children sickened, dead in Papua health crisis

AGATS, Indonesia: Some 800 children have been sickened by a measles-and-malnutrition outbreak in Indonesia's remote Papua province, officials said yesterday, with as many as 100 other people, mostly toddlers, feared to have been killed. The latest figures mark an escalation of a health crisis first made public in mid-January that underscores the severe lack of medical care and other basic services in a far-flung island region shared with Papua New Guinea. Indonesian President Joko Widodo has ordered military and medical teams to bring supplies to remote villages, amid a low-level separatist insurgency largely driven by resentment over conditions in the impoverished region.

Doctors at an overloaded and under-equipped hospital in Agats were struggling to cope Thursday, as crying, rake-thin children wandered smelly hallways where some patients lay on rickety gurneys, an AFP reporter witnessed. Local officials were shocked by the spike in measles cases, which is being blamed partly on weakened immune systems due to lack of food.

Many parents travelled for hours to seek care for their children in Agats, which has the only hospital in the outbreak-hit Asmat region, a swampy area criss-crossed by rivers.

"We received information (about the outbreak) too late so that has led to the high death toll," hospital director Richard Mirino told AFP. Dozens of patients are being treated at a local church due to lack of space at the 80-patient hospital, which sits on stilts like most structures in the area. Gabriel Dem and his malnourished son travelled two hours by boat from a tiny village to reach the hospital, which has little modern equipment and no air conditioning.

"There isn't much food there so we're suffering," Dem said of his community, as he sat in the stifling heat. "In order to eat we have to go out and fish or hunt. There are no shops." The health ministry and military officials said nearly 800 children have been sickened with measles or malnutrition, while some 12,000 kids with no symptoms have been treated, including by vaccination, to prevent a spread of the outbreak. Around 70 children have died around Asmat with more than two dozen others, including children and adults, believed to have perished from the outbreak in the remote and mountainous district of Oksibil. Many Papuans live a semi-nomadic life in hard-to-reach areas that have almost no proper medical care. "There are actually health problems in Papua every year or two... but this (time) it is extraordinary because the death toll is very high so the government thought urgent action needed to be taken," said Papua military spokesman Dax Sianturi. — AFP

Philippines plans forced evacuations from erupting volcano

LEGAZPI, Philippines: Philippine authorities said yesterday they will remove by force people who have refused to leave a no-go zone around an erupting volcano, as they seek to avoid casualties after tens of thousands of others fled to safety. There have been no deaths in the 10 days since Mount Mayon began belching flaming lava, superheated rocks and ash, causing 75,450 residents to flee surrounding farms and communities, civil defense officials said.

However they said people have been leaving the shelters in daytime to tend to their farms and livestock inside the danger zone that now extends to nine kilometers (5.6 miles) from the crater. Maria Evelyn Grollo, who runs a school-turned shelter for more than 4,000 people on the outskirts of Legazpi, said these people were defying the city mayor's order to stay away from farms on Mayon's lower slopes. "In the mornings they go home, especially the men. But in the evenings they are here," she told AFP, adding they easily cross into the danger zone on their motorbikes.

Eileen Nunez, a university student staying at a Legazpi shelter, said her farmer father was among them. "We have animals there ... You can't just leave your livestock behind," she told AFP, adding the family could not afford to abandon its tomato, bitter-gourd and eggplant

crops either since they were not yet ready for harvest.

Pails, no privacy

Akim Berces, operations officer of the regional civil defense office in Legazpi city, told AFP police patrols are guarding the abandoned farms and homes, so people should not go back, adding there have been no reports of looting. A number of residents there were also refusing to leave, he said. "The security (officials) are already talking about it, how they will ensure that it should be a no-man's land," he said, adding officials are mulling "forcing" residents to head for the shelters.

Berces said the authorities had prepared a designated evacuation center for farm animals and wanted cattle, pigs, goats, and chickens to be moved there. Nunez, the student, said living conditions at the schoolroom where her family now stays with 14 other families were better than other shelters where people had complained about lack of toilets, though it was still a far cry from home. The 19-year-old girl said she carries her own pail of water and joins a long queue to wash herself at the common bathroom. She stands in another line for food rations. "It gets hot here. There is not much to do except homework from school," she added.

Disaster tourism

With 51 eruptions in the past four centuries, Mayon, a near-perfect 2,460-metre (8,070-foot) cone about 330 kilometers southeast of Manila, is the most active of the country's 22 volcanoes. Authorities have closed airports in the region, while periodic ash showers have made driving on some roads nearly impossible. Local governments have advised residents to wear facial masks and goggles. — AFP

Lifestyle

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A model presents a creation by Hyum Mi Nielsen during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection fashion show yesterday in Paris.— AFP

‘Soviet Dior’ vows to keep Russian fashion colorful

Lifestyle | Features

Elton John to 'go out with a bang' on final tour

Elton John announced Wednesday that he is retiring from touring, with the consummate showman saying he wants to devote himself to his children—but after a final, massive swing around the world. The 70-year-old British entertainer, revealing his plans at a gala New York event, said he planned to “go out with a bang” with a global tour that will open on September 8 and last through 2021.

“It’s the last time that I will be touring and traveling the world, because my priorities have changed in my life,” John told several hundred journalists and guests after a mini-concert and virtual reality presentation of his career. “I’ve had an amazing life, I’ve had an amazing career,” he said, adding: “My priorities now are my children and my husband and my family.” John, who in the 1980s became one of the first openly gay major celebrities, has two children with his husband, Canadian filmmaker and former advertising executive David Furnish.

The original “Rocket Man” said he had no health concerns, despite a scare with a bacterial infection that caused him to cancel South American dates last year. He said he would stay active, hoping to record more albums and write further musicals. “I will be creative, hopefully, until the day I die,” he said.

Don't let the sun go down on me

Sporting a floral coattail jacket with sequined lapels, John promised an extravagant affair for the “Farewell Yellow Brick Road” tour which will open in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Anticipating 300 shows around the world, the “Farewell Yellow Brick Road” tour could easily become one of the most profitable in music history. “It’s a way of going out with a bang. I don’t want to go out with a whimper,” he said. John’s theatrics have made him a top attraction in Las Vegas. His second residency, the technically lavish “The Million Dollar Piano,” will close in May after more than 200 concerts.

The artist said he still relished pleasing crowds—but, as a septuagenarian, he was more interested in taking his children to soccer practice than in traveling. “I never thought that I could love anything as much as I love my sons. There’s not a word in the English dictionary that describes the love you have for a child,” he said. John made the announcement under the Roman-



Sir Elton John performs two songs before holding a press conference in New York on January 24, 2018. — AFP photos

inspired dome and columns of Gotham Hall, a former bank turned event space in Midtown Manhattan, where guests were offered champagne and shrimp tempura hors d’oeuvres.

The self-described Luddite—“I’ve never downloaded anything, not even porn,” he quipped to laughs—offered a virtual reality retrospective of his career on headsets offered to the audience. The mini-biography starts in 1970 at West Hollywood’s Troubadour club, where the little-known pianist, born Reginald Dwight, electrified the crowd. It then takes the viewer on stage with him at his legendary 1975 blowouts at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles.

Still standing

John, often known as Sir Elton after a knighthood by Queen Elizabeth II, has generated decades of hits such as “I’m Still Standing,” “Don’t Let the Sun Go Down on Me” and “Can You Feel the Love Tonight.” His style brought together the old-school rhythm-and-blues piano of early rock ‘n’ roll with Gospel influ-

ences as well as a solid grounding in classical music. The artist has also earned a fortune as a composer for musicals including blockbuster “The Lion King,” “Billy Elliot” and the upcoming adaptation of “The Devil Wears Prada.”

Forbes magazine in 2017 ranked him as the 26th highest-earning celebrity, earning \$60 million over the previous year. After struggles in the past with addiction and depression, John’s last studio album, “Wonderful Crazy Night,” carried a palpable sense of joy. Last year he put out a greatest hits collection dubbed “Diamonds.” John said he was open to one-off concerts after his tour but that they would likely only be in Britain. But he has one firm red-line. He said he had instructed his eldest son Zachary, “When Daddy dies, promise me—there won’t be a hologram of me going around the world.” — AFP

Iglesias sues Universal over streaming royalties

The Latin pop star and actor Enrique Iglesias on Wednesday sued Universal Music Group in the United States, claiming that his former label short-changed him out of millions of dollars of streaming royalties. In a complaint filed with the US District Court in Manhattan, Iglesias said Universal had paid only a “small fraction” of the 50 percent royalty rate for streamed music that he said his contract required. His lawyer said Universal had wrongly insisted that recording artists be paid for streams in the same way they are paid for album sales, despite the absence of similar costs for production, distribution and other overhead.

The lawsuit seeks to recoup unpaid royalties, following an inspection of Universal’s books. It was filed against a Netherlands-based affiliate, Universal International Music BV. Universal did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Iglesias, 42, whose father is Spanish singer Julio Iglesias, began his recording career in 1995, and according to the complaint has sold more than 100 million albums and generated billions of streams. Universal became Enrique Iglesias’ home label in 1999, and he remained there until departing for Sony Music in 2015.—Reuters



Sofia Coppola didn't want to be a filmmaker

Sofia Coppola never wanted to be a filmmaker. The 46-year-old director—who is the daughter of the Hollywood legend Francis Ford Coppola—never intended to follow in her father’s footsteps and had other passions in life before she turned to cinema, including design, photography and music. Coppola—who has made a number of acclaimed films, including her first ever movie “The Virgin Suicides”—told the Guardian newspaper said: “I never thought I would be a filmmaker. It wasn’t something I ever planned, despite the fact I loved hanging around on sets.

“That’s how I learned to do it. At a young age, I was really into fashion and clothes although I felt frustrated at art school. “I had so many interests—design, photography, music—but I just couldn’t find one medium that really clicked for me. “Then I made a short film, ‘Lick the Star’ in 1998, and it brought together the things I loved.” Coppola grew up around her Academy Award-winning father and would often seek advice from “The Godfather” director. — Bang Showbiz



From refugee to chef: Berlin film festival to showcase Syrian cook

A Syrian refugee will be cooking dishes from Damascus and Aleppo for VIP guests at the opening of the Berlinale International Film Festival next month. The choice of Malakeh Jazmati reflects the mission of the festival, which was set up in 1951 to showcase films that address urgent social and political issues in the world. The festival devoted its program to refugees and migration in 2016 after Europe's politics were convulsed by the arrival of more than a million refugees from the Middle East and Africa, including Jazmati herself.

At the Berlin film festival opening reception in February, the

30-year-old chef, who runs a catering business in the German capital with her husband, will be cooking for more than 400 guests attending the opening reception. "When I went and saw it's not just any film festival but the Berlinale, I was more than happy," she said of her reaction on learning she had been chosen. "It's like getting to fulfill your dreams."

She will be working under the management of Berlinale's chef Martin Scharff and cooperating with the Lebanese-American cook Barbara Massaad, known for her Syrian cookbook. Her menu will range from Aleppo stuffed aubergine to a Damascene

"Syrian pasta", seasoned with tamarind sauce and pomegranate molasses. "People think about our food that we only have falafel and hummus, but after that they see it's a very big kitchen," Jazmati told Reuters TV. The festival will open on February 15 with the world premiere of Wes Anderson's animated film *Isle of Dogs*, starring Hollywood actors such as Bill Murray, Scarlett Johansson and Tilda Swinton. — Reuters



Indians queue up to enter the cinema hall before the scheduled show of Bollywood film "Padmaavat" in Mumbai.



An Indian policeman gestures at the entrance of Ritz cinema hall scheduled to screen Bollywood film "Padmaavat" in the northern hill town of Shimla yesterday. — AFP photos

Hindu queen film opens in India amid violence threats

Thousands of police in riot gear guarded cinemas across India yesterday amid threats of violence by Hindu hardliners opposed to the release of a movie about a legendary Hindu queen and a Muslim king. Some schools near Delhi closed after an attack on a school bus, while distributors in several states have said they will not show "Padmaavat" because of fears of violence. The Bollywood epic still opened in nearly 5,000 cinemas across the country yesterday under heightened security.

Two theatres in eastern Bihar state were set upon by mobs who damaged vehicles and threatened cinema goers. A molotov cocktail was hurled at another cinema in neighboring Uttar Pradesh state but staff quickly doused the flames. Paramilitary forces and police in riot gear manned barriers around cinemas in New Delhi, Mumbai and other main cities. Radical groups say the film falsely portrays Queen Padmavati. The producers vehemently deny the claim while most historians doubt that Padmavati even existed.

Fanatical groups belonging to India's Rajput caste, who revere Padmavati, have led protests against the film for nearly a year. They have been supported by other Hindu groups since the film was cleared for release by the state censor this month. The group staged a motorcycle rally through Jaipur in Rajasthan, one of three states where cinema owners refused to show the film for security reasons.

Dozens of school children ducked inside a bus that was pelted with stones by anti-Padmaavat protesters in Gurgaon, a satellite city of Delhi. Another bus was set on fire. Police said yesterday that 18 people had been arrested over the bus attack and 10 others for affray. On Tuesday several hundred people attacked shops, set alight dozens of motorbikes and damaged more than 150 cars

across Gujarat state's main city Ahmedabad.

Bollywood fears

Nearly 250 accused have been arrested over the rampage. Gujarat state home minister Pradipsinh Jadeja said late Wednesday. In Mumbai—the home of India's Bollywood film industry—police rounded up 50 people affiliated to a hardline Hindu group after protesters set car tyres ablaze during an angry demonstration late Tuesday. The film drew few spectators at early morning screenings in New Delhi as police erected iron barricades outside cinemas that did not display promotional posters to avoid any backlash. Sanjay Bhargava, manager at a New Delhi cinema, told AFP there was an "atmosphere of fear" due to the threats but he still expected a busy weekend. "As of now there is a bit of fear but with foolproof police protection, we hope things will improve soon," Bhargava said outside his cinema, protected by dozens of police, in the central Connaught Place district. The film featured three disclaimers informing viewers that it did not claim to be historically accurate. Sabrina Ghosh, a young movie buff, was not deterred by the paramilitary officers and barricades surrounding the Delhi cinema where she rushed to catch the debut screening. The 23-year-old described the violent outburst before the film's release as "disgusting". "No one has any right to go around torching buses and cars. If you don't like it, don't watch it," she told AFP at the cinema.

Year of controversy

Opponents claim the movie features a romantic liaison between Padmavati and 14th-century Muslim ruler Alauddin Khilji despite

repeated denials by filmmakers. The movie's producers say the film celebrates Rajputs, who were traditionally warriors. The protesters insist the movie distorts history, even though experts say the queen is a mythical character and that her story is based on a poem written more than a century later. Trouble first hit the movie in January last year when Rajput Karni Sena members attacked the film's director Sanjay Leela Bhansali and vandalized the set during filming in Rajasthan.

Members of the fringe groups have threatened to attack cinemas while hundreds of women have said they are ready to perform a mass self-immolation if screenings go ahead. Hardliners also offered bounties of up to 50 million rupees (\$770,000) to anyone who "beheaded" lead actress Deepika Padukone or Bhansali. States including Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab tried to ban the film but India's Supreme Court ruled that this would violate creative freedoms. "Padmaavat" stars Shahid Kapoor as Maharawal Ratan Singh, the husband of Padmavati, and Ranveer Singh as Khilji, who leads an invasion to try to capture the queen. It was initially due to hit screens on December 1 but filmmakers pushed back the release because of the controversy. Despite the threats, industry watchers still expect "Padmaavat" to be a box office hit. "The movie will make one billion rupees (\$15.7 million) over the long weekend from Thursday to Sunday despite the protests," trade analyst Akshaye Rathi told AFP, referring to India's Republic Day holiday today. — AFP



Models gather around Elie Saab, second left during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection fashion show on January 24, 2018 in Paris. — AFP photos

PARIS COUTURE: CARDIN HONORED; SERGEENKO FACES BACKLASH

The 95-year-old French fashion icon Pierre Cardin made an exceptionally rare appearance at Paris Couture Week, model Naomi Campbell led fashion industry insiders in criticizing designer Ulyana Sergeenko over a racist slur, and Valentino was sublime. Some highlights from Wednesday's spring-summer shows:

Pierre Cardin at 95

Cardin, who founded his influential brand in 1950, attended a couture show by Jean Paul Gaultier that paid tribute to his styles. The Italian-born designer is a contemporary of Christian Dior, who died in 1957. He is, along with Hubert de Givenchy, one of the last living members of the post-War fashion generation.

Age has done little to dampen the designer's famed acerbic tongue and frankness, who said the homage was a tad dramatic and remained undoubtedly the "personal" work of Gaultier. "It was creative, but quite theatrical all the same. That's the will of Gaultier, his personality," Cardin said. "He is an artist. I am very proud for him," he added.

Lifestyle | Fashion



Gaultier's tribute

Reactions to the Giorgio Armani Prive show, which brought French stars Marion Cotillard, Isabelle Huppert and German actress Diane Kruger to the front row, were decidedly more mixed, however. The veteran designer's "evening shorts" and crystal leggings got short shrift from some critics, as did another creation which Friedman described as "paillette-covered bloomers".

There were no bum notes, however, at Jean Paul Gaultier, who paid tribute to his mentor Pierre Cardin in another largely binary show of blacks and whites evoking the nonagenarian

creator's psychedelic and Asia-inspired 1960s heyday. The French iconoclast told AFP that Cardin—who was on the front row and is still designing at 95 — was a trailblazer who hired him even though he was two years behind in school and had no qualifications.

"He must have liked the colors in my drawings because I can tell you they weren't up to much," Gaultier joked. Dutch duo Viktor & Rolf served up another winningly quirky collections with everything-from staggering "Alice in Wonderland" applique flowers to their running rat-tan motif-made from one material, satin duchesse.



Models presents a creation by Elie Saab during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.— AFP

Lifestyle | Fashion



Couture designer Sergeenko faces backlash over racist slur

Model Naomi Campbell criticized prominent Paris-based designer Ulyana Sergeenko for casually using a racist slur. Russian Sergeenko handwrote a note addressed to "my n - -s in Paris" alongside a smiley to her friend, blogger Miroslava Duma, who posted a photo of the note online Monday. Sergeenko, whose new collection was shown Tuesday, said the reference was inspired by a Kanye West track with the same title.

Campbell was among those shocked and wrote "this better not be real" in reply. Sergeenko posted an apology Tuesday that made matters worse saying "and yes, we call each other the N word sometimes when we want to believe that we are just as

cool as these guys who sing it." The house wouldn't comment to AP. "It's really shocking to see comments from people you admire. Are they detached from reality? It's not fun to be a racist or a bigot," said Bryan Grey Yambao, also known as Bryanboy, a Filipino fashion blogger.

It's not the first time that racism-tinged controversy has rocked Paris fashion week. In 2015, shoe giant Timberland severed all ties with French menswear company APC after its house founder Jean Touitou used the N-word in a live narration at the APC menswear show - reportedly, again, in homage to West. "Have people not learned their lessons?" Yambao asked.

Models present creations by Jean Paul Gaultier during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection fashion show.



Models present creations by Lebanese designer Georges Hobeika during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection on January 22, 2018 in Paris.

Lifestyle | Features



Elie Saab's roaring twenties

To brash Jazz music worthy of a party hosted by F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Lebanese designer Elie Saab put on his dancing shoes for an exuberant ode to the Roaring Twenties. Paris, "the city of love, the city of sin," was the setting, as models in column silhouettes slinked provocatively down a gilded stone staircase and onto the catwalk. It wasn't just the music that was attention-grabbing.

Giant neck bows, embellished cloche hats, capes, split legs and plunging necklines came alongside cinched waists. Mini-skirts on models were richly adorned in sequins and ostrich feathers. The strongest part of the 54-design collection was Saab's exploration of the Art Deco styles popular in the post-World War I era. One black gown with structured silver and gold accents got its power from the simplicity of its silhouette. Sometimes, less is more. — AP



A picture taken shows creations by Ulyana Sergeenko during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection presentation in Paris.



Models presents a creation by Hyum Mi Nielsen during the 2018 spring/summer Haute Couture collection fashion show.



Russia's most famous fashion designer Slava Zaitsev poses during an interview at his fashion house in Moscow. — AFP photos



Designer Slava Zaitsev (right) presents one of his creation.

'Soviet Dior' vows to keep Russian fashion colorful

At almost 80, Russia's most famous fashion designer Slava Zaitsev is far from finished fighting "the greyness of everyday life" with the rich colors of designs inspired by his homeland's folk costumes. Dubbed the "Soviet Christian Dior" in the 1960s by the French press, the designer achieved global success with bright dresses adorned with the flower patterns found on traditional Russian shawls. Despite this, Zaitsev wore a simple black suit for an interview with AFP at his 10-storey "House of Fashion" in central Moscow.

The designer looked back at his eventful career, from a modest childhood in Ivanovo, a town of 400,000

initially was barred from attending a top-flight university because his father, taken captive by the Nazis during World War II, was, like other former prisoners-of-war, labeled an "enemy of the people" by the suspicious regime of Joseph Stalin and sentenced to 10 years in a labor camp. Zaitsev studied at a vocational college until the age of 18 and then went on to the unglamorous Moscow Textile Institute. "During my studies, I lived with a family whose children I looked after. The apartment was tiny and I slept on the floor under the table," he recalled.

Under KGB surveillance

In 1962, Zaitsev's first collection of clothes—a uniform for female workers that featured skirts with the flower patterns of traditional Russian shawls and multicolored boots—was rejected by Soviet authorities. "The colors were too

bright and contrasted with the greyness of Soviet everyday life, where an individual should not differ from the rest of society," he said. But the collection nonetheless attracted international attention. In 1963, French magazine *Paris Match* became the first Western media

“No greyness, no sadness and no clichés”

Zaitsev was initially refused permission to leave the Soviet Union and his first collections were shown abroad without him. "I did not understand. What sort of state secret could I pass on to my foreign colleagues? Thank God this era is long gone," he said. Zaitsev, who turns 80 in March, remembered his first trips abroad where "everything was different," including the way people dressed: "no greyness, no sadness and no clichés."

Dressing Putin's ex-wife

Zaitsev said he finds happiness "working with people every day" in creating designs for his individual clients, rather than for catwalk shows. Between 2007 and 2009, he presented a popular television show called "The Verdict of Fashion," in which stylists dressed participants in the latest street looks. At 79, he says he only sleeps five hours a

night and works with the latest software to create new patterns for his materials. Zaitsev counts several Russian movie stars, singers and the ex-wife of President Vladimir Putin, Lyudmila, among his clients.

Last November, he presented his spring/summer 2018 collection in Moscow for which he used new textile technology to create materials inspired by the shawls of Pavlovsky Posad, a small town east of Moscow. The second part of his collection pays homage to the New Look of 1940s Dior, with retro high fashion designs in velvet and silk. During his career, Zaitsev produced more than 1,000 designs.

"I can dress a whole Red Square parade with my clothes," he joked. Asked what fashion advice he would give to the modern woman, the designer said they should "throw their ripped jeans and trainers in the bin" and put on skirts and high heels. — AFP



Russia's most famous fashion designer Slava Zaitsev speaks during an interview on November 23, 2017 at his fashion house in Moscow.

people to the north east of the capital, to the catwalks of Paris, New York and Tokyo. "When I was a child, my mother taught me embroidery so I wouldn't roam the streets without purpose. In the evenings I would pick flowers with girls on Lenin Avenue to draw them and recreate them in embroidery. That's how I began my adventure in art," said Zaitsev.

Born into a poor family with a mother who worked as a cleaner, Zaitsev



A woman stands next to creations of Russia's most famous fashion designer Slava Zaitsev at the fashion house.



Slava Zaitsev (right) presents one of his creation during an interview.

Behind enemy lines: Vietnam's female spies who helped change the war



In this picture Nguyen Thi Hoa (left) and Hoang Thi No, who were members of the Perfume River squad - a top secret female combat unit formed in 1967, look at a grave of a comrade killed during the 1968 "Tet Offensive", on the outskirts of Hue.



Hoang Thi No, shows a photograph of squad members in Vietcong uniform during an interview with AFP at her home in Hue. — AFP photos

By day Nguyen Thi Hoa sold conical hats on the streets of Hue in southern Vietnam, at night she funneled secrets to Communist army handlers who were poised to launch an audacious assault on the city that would reshape the Vietnam War. Hoa was part of the Perfume River squad, a top secret female combat unit formed in 1967 and bound by the communist propaganda slogan: "When the enemy comes to your home, even the women should fight".

Deployed deep in enemy territory, the covert 11-strong unit played an instrumental role in the 1968 'Tet Offensive' despite most of them being in their teens. The offensive, whose 50th anniversary will be marked on January 31 with an official ceremony in Ho Chi Minh City, was a military failure for the northern forces. But it swung US public opinion decisively away from the anti-communist fight, ultimately leading to the American pullout.

Women were integral to the communist North's battle against American "foreign invaders", working mainly in non-combat roles for most of the war as spies and guides, cooks and messengers, mules and nurses for the injured. Using her cover as a street trader, Hoa gleaned details on enemy movements in the strategically important imperial city of Hue, feeding informa-

tion to commanders from the north.

It was a role driven by conviction in the communist cause. "I wanted to liberate myself, liberate my homeland, and liberate other women... there was no other path besides joining the revolution," she told AFP in Hue where she settled after the war. She was just 17 when she joined the war effort as a spy and secret messenger in 1965. Two years later she joined the Perfume River unit, named after the waterway that intersects Hue city, a role so risky she didn't even tell her family.

'We just kept shooting'

War came to Hue, then the third largest city in Vietnam, in the early hours of January 31, 1968. It was a key target of the Tet Offensive—a series of surprise attacks across southern Vietnam by more than 80,000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong fighters. The attacks, which also hit Saigon, stunned US troops and their south Vietnam allies. Casualties were massive for both sides, especially the North which lost an estimated 58,000 people. The shock assault on Hue saw the citadel swiftly fall to the North and for days a blue and red flag with a bright yellow star—a symbol of communist Hanoi and its allies—flew proudly over the city. But US marines and

southern troops countered, taking 26 days to wrest back the city block-by-block in a battle that would become the longest and one of the bloodiest of the Vietnam War. With casualties high, the Perfume River Unit was called on to join the fight. Until then they had mostly been ferrying injured fighters from the frontline.

The women dug in around markets and the sports stadium. Hurling grenades and shooting her AK-47, Hoa says it was a battle for survival. "We just kept shooting... if we didn't shoot, they would have shot us, so we just kept fighting," said Hoa, 69, who was doused in Agent Orange during the war and later gave birth to a disabled son. The use of female fighters "shows how desperate they (the North) were," said Mark Bowden, author of "Hue 1968". "Every hand was thrown into the fight and at that point these young women fought," he told AFP.

Their efforts were recognized in a poem by Hanoi's revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh, who died in 1969 before the war's end, praising them for having "crushed the bones" of American soldiers and crystallizing their heroism which is still celebrated today. "When we received that letter, everyone cried," fellow Perfume River Unit fighter Hoang Thi No, 68, told AFP at her home

in Hue, sitting under a commemorative plate of 'Uncle Ho'. "We didn't expect it, we were just a small unit, and so many people died."

'Revenge for our sisters'

The nod from Uncle Ho came too late for four members of the unit who perished during the battle for Hue. "My comrades died... and our anger mounted, as did our determination to fight to get revenge for our sisters," the soft-spoken grandmother told AFP. Two more died later in the war-but five are still alive. No and Hoa regularly visit the cemetery where some of their fallen comrades are buried on the outskirts of Hue, a city transformed from a pile of rubble 50 years ago to a tourist hotspot today. Although they weren't the only women to take up arms in the Vietnam War, their reputation as fierce fighters inspired others to join the war—both as soldiers and behind the frontlines. "The Perfume River Unit... were a source of motivation for liberation soldiers and other women to join the war effort," according to Cao Huy Hung, director of the Revolutionary Museum in Hue. "If soldiers didn't get support from women, I don't think we could have held out in Hue for 26 days, maybe just a week maximum." — AFP

Dutch robots help make cheese, 'smell' the roses

It might be one small move for a robot, but it could prove an important step for Dutch cheesemakers. Moonlander, invented by students, is here to help take the hard work out of curds and whey. At a display of creations by final-year robotics students at the Delft University of Technology (TU Delft), the Moonlander robot was one of the star attractions as it smoothly trundled 12-kilogramme (26-pound) wheels of cheese from one place to another. A cross between a flying saucer and a crab, the machine aims to help Dutch dairy farmers more easily heft huge discs of cheese which must be regularly turned as they mature.

It can collect the curds in a mold once the milk has solidified, move and turn the cheese during the pressing and then soak it in brine. "Moonlander can move autonomously and work in different stations. It can scan the room to find the different places where it has to take the cheese to," said student Timo van Frankenhuyzen proudly.

He and fellow students on the course at

the Netherlands' oldest and biggest technical university had only five months to design and build from scratch made-to-order creations for both private and public-sector clients. More than 100 students applied to take part in the Robotica course. "But we only accepted the best and the most motivated," said course coordinator Martin Klomp. At the department's open day, eight machines were shown off, having been constructed by teams of up to six students.

It is unsurprising perhaps in the Netherlands, the world's second largest exporter of agricultural products, that labour-saving devices for farms and fields were particularly sought-after. So after the Gouda, came not tulips but roses. Mounted on a tripod, the Roselia camera looked over a small bed of white and red roses. While people need months of training to learn when a rose can be plucked, "students have taught Roselia, through a network of neurons, to identify which roses are ready and point them out to the pickers," said Klomp.

Barrie the barman, 2.0

Barrie the barman, meanwhile, didn't know which way to turn. The orders were flooding in, and he couldn't keep up. But one of his inventors, Jonathan Raes, came to the rescue, dropping to his knees to open Barrie's back, push a few buttons and get the coffee flowing again. Barrie is meant to brighten up the coffee corner, as he has "an interface allowing you to play a game while waiting for your drink," said industrial design student Joppe de Waart.

But the imposing, elegant silver Barrie appeared to go into a sulk, refusing to serve a soda to a little girl. "He's a little primitive," Raes' grandmother teased. TU Delft and its cutting-edge robotics institute have won a global reputation. Robotics "provides an answer to some of the grand challenges of the 21st century," the institute says on its website. These include "reliable labour, assisting or replacing humans where conditions are dangerous, unhealthy or unethical".

Fizzy, the purring ball

Fizzy, the purring ball, meanwhile had given its makers a sleepless night, when one of its parts melted on the eve of the presentation. The robot was conceived as a companion for sick children being treated for cancer. "When a child approaches Fizzy, it begins to roll away. If the child catches it, it vibrates, and if it is stroked, it purrs. On the other hand, if it needs some attention then it begins to tremble," said Eveline Drijver, one of the team who worked on the design.

The children's oncology centre at the Princess Maxima hospital in Utrecht asked the students to design the toy, welcoming anything to cheer up their young patients. "We still need to make a few modifications so Fizzy rolls better, but hopefully the children will soon be able to play with him," said another team member Tim Rietveld. He sees a future in which everything will be done by robots. "I'm passionate about robots," he said, "and in a few years all objects will be robotised." — AFP

Homemade jam that uses berries to sweeten, instead of sugar

By Melissa D'Arabian

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

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

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

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

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

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



No-fuss no-sugar-added berry jam

Ingredients

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

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

Preparation

Place the chopped dates and water into a medium sauce pan and simmer for a minute or two to soften the dates. Add the chopped apple and frozen berries, and increase heat to medium

high, and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally.

Once the mixture is boiling, turn up the heat to high, and let boil vigorously, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens and turns jammy, about 3-4 minutes. (Carefully add a tablespoon of water if mixture starts to get dry.) Once the jam feels like it's thickening, turn off the heat and stir in lime zest, lime juice and vanilla extract if using. Cool before serving.

Sauteed Duck Breasts are elegant entree for Valentine's Day

By Sara Moulton

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

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

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

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

Two tips about cooking duck breast: First, let it cook for the majority of the necessary time with the skin side down so that the skin becomes crispy and the fat is rendered out. Leave the hot fat in the pan as it accumulates; it helps to melt even more fat from the skin. Secondly, be sure to let the duck breast rest after it's been cooked. As with any other animal protein, cooking the breast chases its juices to its outside layers. As the breast rests, the juices are reabsorbed, which prevents the duck from drying out when sliced.

SAUTEED DUCK BREASTS

Ingredients:

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

Preparation:

Using a very sharp knife, lightly score the skin on each duck breast half in a crisscross pattern, all the way down but not through the meat. Pat the duck dry. Sprinkle the skin side lightly with the salt and in a large, cold skillet, place the duck, skin side down. Turn the heat to medium and cook until the fat starts to render out into the pan. Reduce the heat to medium-low and continue cooking the duck breasts until the skin looks very crispy, about 8 minutes. Do not pour off the fat; the liquid fat in the pan helps to render out the fat in the skin.

When the duck skin is crisp, transfer the breasts to a plate. Pour off all but 1 tablespoon of the fat from the pan (reserve it for another use, such as sauteeing vegetables). Return the duck to the skillet, skin side up, and cook for another 3 to 5 minutes for medium-rare. Transfer the duck to a clean plate, skin side up. Cover it loosely with foil and let it rest for 10 minutes before slicing.

Add the shallots to the pan and cook them over medium heat, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the wine to the skillet, increase the heat to high and simmer until the wine is reduced to about 2 tablespoons. Add the cream, bring it to a boil and simmer until it is reduced by one-third and thickened, about 3 minutes. Whisk in the mustard, peppercorns, duck juices from the plate the duck is resting on and salt to taste.



Sudoku

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

Solution

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



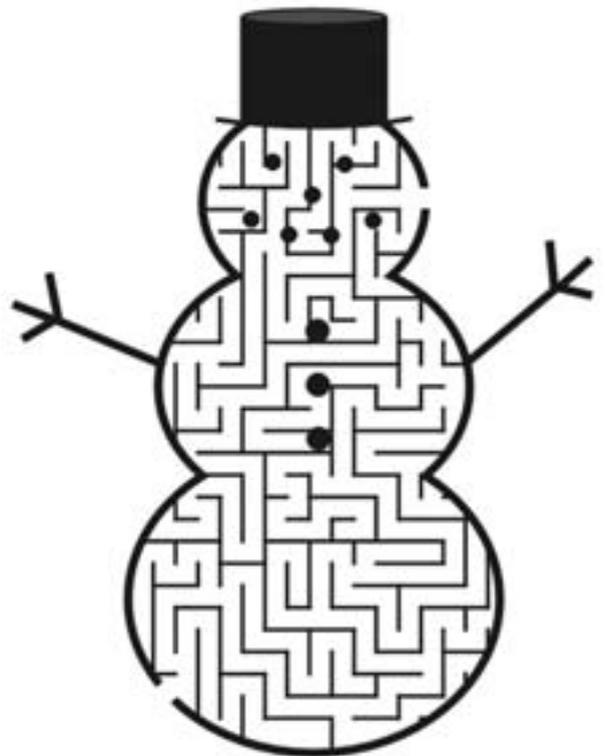
A crocodile cannot stick its tongue out.
 A shrimp's heart is in its head.
 It is physically impossible for pigs to look up into the sky.
 The "sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick" is believed to be the toughest tongue twister in the English language.
 If you sneeze too hard, you could fracture a rib.
 Wearing headphones for just an hour could increase the bacteria in your ear by 700 times.
 In the course of an average lifetime, while sleeping you might eat around 70 assorted insects and 10 spiders, or more.
 Some lipsticks contain fish scales.
 Cat urine glows under a black-light.
 Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.

Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.
 There are 293 ways to make change for a dollar.
 The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing (when using the proper position of the hands on the keyboard; Hunting and pecking doesn't count!).
 A shark is the only known fish that can blink with both eyes.
 "Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt".
 Almonds are a member of the peach family.
 Maine is the only state that has a one-syllable name.
 There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous": tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous.

JOKES

- Q: Knock-knock—Who's there?—Yukon—
 Yukon who?
 A: Yukon say that again!
- Q: Knock, knock—Who's There?—Boo—
 Boo Who?
 A: Well you don't have to cry about it.
- Q: Knock, knock—Who's There?—Theodore—
 Theodore who?
 A: Theodore is stuck and it won't open!
- Q: Knock-knock—Who's there?—Cher—
 Cher who?
 A: Cher would be nice if you opened the door!
- Q: Knock, knock—Who's There?—Amos—
 Amos who?
 A: A mosquito bit me!
- Q: Knock, knock—Who's There?—Police—
 Police Who?
 A: Police let us in, it's cold out here!

Color Me



Comic

WORD SEARCH

Marine Life

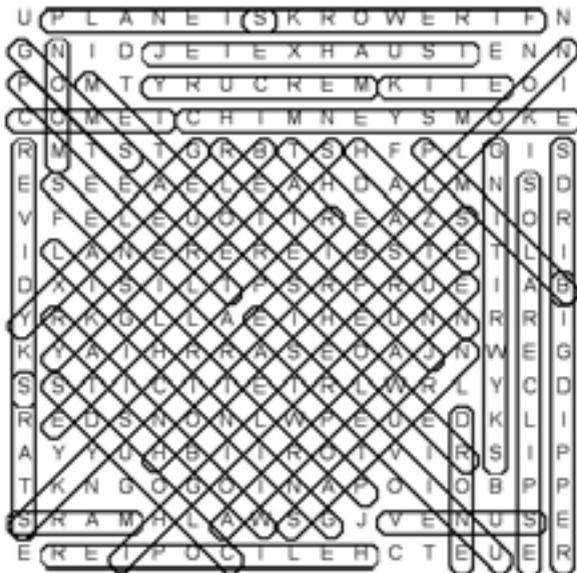
Find and circle all of the listed words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a sea animal.

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

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| ANCHOVY | MANATEE | SEA TURTLE |
| BARRACUDA | MARLIN | SEALS |
| CLAM | OCTOPUS | SHELLFISH |
| CLOWNFISH | OYSTER | SHRIMP |
| COD | PENGUIN | SPONGE |
| CRAB | PORPOISE | SQUID |
| DOLPHIN | PRAWN | STARFISH |
| HALLIBUT | SARDINE | STINGRAY |
| JELLYFISH | SCALLOP | TUNA |
| LAMPREY | SEA LION | WALRUS |
| LOBSTER | SEA OTTER | WHALE |

Yesterday's Solution

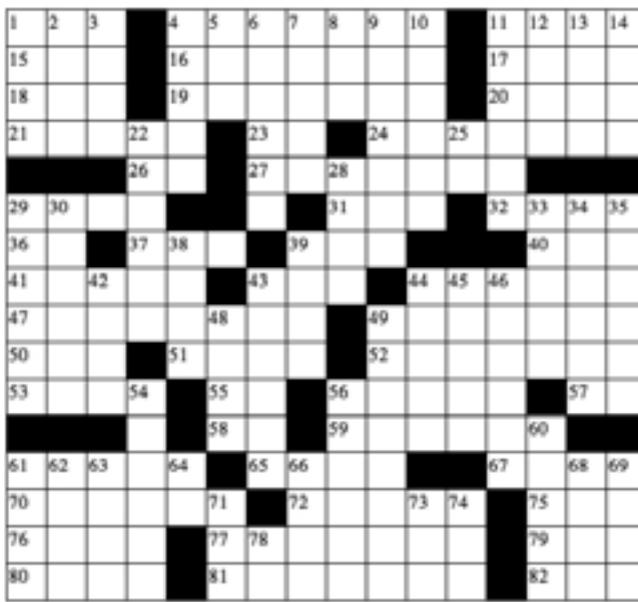
Look Up!



- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| AIRPLANE | GALAXY | METEOR SHOWER | SMOG |
| BIG DIPPER | HAZE | MOON | SOLAR ECLIPSE |
| BIRDS | HELICOPTER | PLANETS | STARS |
| BLIMP | HOT AIR BALLOON | POWER LINES | STREET LIGHT |
| BLUE SKY | JET EXHAUST | RAINBOW | THE SUN |
| CHIMNEY SMOKE | JUPITER | SATELLITE | TREETOP |
| CLOUDS | KITE | SATURN | UNIVERSE |
| COMET | LIGHTNING | SKYDIVER | VENUS |
| DRONE | MARS | SKYSCRAPER | |
| FIREWORKS | MERCURY | SKYWRITING | |

The hidden message is: UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT

CROSSWORD 1819



ACROSS

- 10 hao equal 1 dong.
- French diplomat who supervised the construction of the Suez Canal (1805-1894).
- The handle of a weapon or tool.
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- Any substance (as a toxin or enzyme) that stimulates the production of antibodies.
- A Spanish river.
- Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.
- A flattened stem resembling and functioning as a leaf.
- An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
- The state prevailing during the absence of war.
- A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.
- (Greek mythology) The Titan who was father of Atlas and Epimetheus and Prometheus in ancient mythology.
- A doctor's degree in optometry.
- A person who knocks (as seeking to gain admittance).
- A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
- Something that remunerates.
- Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
- Being nine more than forty.
- A fluorocarbon with chlorine.
- The act of using.
- A small Asian country high in the Himalayas between India and Tibet.
- Admitting of bail.
- Inquire about.

- A correctional institution used to detain persons who are in the lawful custody of the government (either accused persons awaiting trial or convicted persons serving a sentence).
- Aromatic Eurasian perennial.
- Lacking or deprive of the sense of hearing wholly or in part.
- A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
- A state in east central United States.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- Wild sheep of northern Africa.
- The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
- Small usually bright-colored semi-aquatic salamanders of North America and Europe and North Asia.
- A short labored intake of breath with the mouth open.
- Relating to the blood vessels or blood.
- An effortful attempt to attain a goal.
- Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
- A member of the Caddo people who formerly lived in the Dakotas west of the Missouri river.
- A light touch or stroke.
- South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
- Being unoccupied.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Predatory black-and-white toothed whale with large dorsal fin.
- Closed with a lace.
- An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
- A large number or amount.
- The main city of ancient Phoenicia.
- An inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Marked by deception.
- Old World woody vines.
- Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
- A married German woman.
- A large number or amount.
- Of or relating to or near the coccyx.
- The 17th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- Give pleasure to.
- Tropical tree of Central America and West Indies and Puerto Rico having spikes of white flowers.
- (used especially of glances) Directed to one side with or as if with doubt or suspicion or envy.
- A rational motive for a belief or action.
- Emblem usually consisting of a rectangular piece of cloth of distinctive design.
- A Gaelic-speaking Celt in Ireland or Scotland or the Isle of Man.
- Small short-eared burrowing mam-

- mal of rocky uplands of Asia and western North America.
- A favorite saying of a sect or political group.
- Found along western Atlantic coast.
- Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
- A motley assortment of things.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- Of or relating to ancient Boeotia or its people or to the dialect spoken there in classical times.
- Someone who makes frames (as for pictures).
- New Zealand timber tree resembling the cypress.
- (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
- An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
- The battle in 1806 in which Napoleon decisively defeated the Prussians.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- Surpassing the ordinary especially in size or scale.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
- A room equipped with toilet facilities.
- Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
- The chance to speak.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



01:25 Beyond Redemption
03:00 The Last Witch Hunter
04:50 Virtual Revolution
06:30 The Avengers
08:55 Beyond Redemption
10:30 The Last Witch Hunter
12:20 Batman: The Killing Joke
13:40 The Avengers
16:05 Allegiant
18:10 Warcraft: The Beginning
20:15 The Rock
22:35 Deadpool



00:50 Lone Star Law
01:45 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Preposterous Pets
03:35 Snake Sheila
04:00 Snake Sheila
04:25 Whale Wars
05:15 Whale Wars
06:02 Mutant Planet
06:49 Lone Star Law
07:36 Night
08:00 Night
08:25 Snake Sheila
08:50 Snake Sheila
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Preposterous Pets
11:05 Mutant Planet
12:00 Snake Sheila
12:28 Snake Sheila
12:55 Whale Wars
13:50 Whale Wars
14:45 Preposterous Pets
15:40 Mutant Planet
16:35 Lone Star Law
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 Keeping Up With The Kruger
19:20 The Lion Queen
20:15 Preposterous Pets
21:10 Snake Sheila
21:38 Snake Sheila
22:05 Keeping Up With The Kruger
23:00 Blood Ivory
23:55 Mutant Planet



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
12:05 Holby City
13:00 Eastenders
13:30 Eastenders
14:00 Eastenders
14:35 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



00:00 Fritz By Fred Dinenage
01:00 The First 48
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
03:00 Fred Dineage: Murder Case-book
04:00 Fritz By Fred Dinenage

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
10:00 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
11:00 Cold Case Files
12:00 The Eleven
13:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:00 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 Eleven
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
03:00 How The Earth Works
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 How The Earth Works
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
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 How The Earth Works
17:00 Don't Blink
17:25 Don't Blink
17:50 The Carbonaro Effect
18:15 The Carbonaro Effect
18:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 Don't Blink
22:00 The Carbonaro Effect
22:25 The Carbonaro Effect
22:50 How The Earth Works
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:50 Shallow Grave: People Magazine Investigates
01:45 House Of Horrors: Kidnapped
02:40 Killer Confessions
03:35 Murder Book
04:30 Shallow Grave: 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
10:10 Nightmare Next Door
11:05 Disappeared
12:00 Married With Secrets
12:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Nightmare Next Door
15:40 Disappeared
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
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 Murder 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: Queen For A Day
08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
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.
12:55 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 Alex & Co: How To Grow Up Despite Your Parents
19:00 The Zhuzhus
19:15 Bunk'd
19:40 Girl Meets World
20:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:10 Liv And Maddie
20:35 Jessie
21:00 Tangled: The Series
21:25 K.C. Undercover
21:50 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:15 Bizaardvark
22:40 Stuck In The Middle
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & 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 The Great Never Sea Conquest
17:50 Minnie's Bow-Toons
18:00 Goldie & Bear
18:15 Goldie & Bear
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals
18:55 Sofia The First
19:25 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:10 The Lion Guard
20:35 P-King Duckling
21:00 Vampirina
21:30 PJ Masks
22:00 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 Kings Of The Wild
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 Kings Of The Wild
16:15 Deadliest Job Interview
17:05 Sean Conway: On The Edge
17:50 Blowing Up History
18:40 Tesla's Death Ray: A Murderer 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 Supa Strikas
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow
07:15 Mech-X4
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse

07:45 Walk The Prank
08:10 Walk The Prank
08:35 Right Now Kapow
09:00 Right Now Kapow
09:25 Mighty Med
09:50 Mighty Med
10:20 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat
12:25 Two More Eggs
12:30 Kid vs. Kat
12:55 Kirby Buckets
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
16:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
16:25 Lab Rats
16:50 Lab Rats
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Supa Strikas
18:30 Marvel's Ant-Man
18:35 Walk The Prank
19:00 Gravity Falls
19:25 Milo Murphy's Law
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Mech-X4
20:20 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Kid vs. Kat
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:00 Tia Mowry At Home
01:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
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: Fast Feasts
09:25 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
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: Fast Feasts
13:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
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 Guy & Hunter's European Vacation
20:30 Guy & Hunter's European Vacation
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 Inside Windsor Castle
04:25 Martin Clunes: Islands Of Australia
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
07:05 Cash Trapped
08:00 Inside Windsor Castle
09:00 Martin Clunes: Islands Of Australia
10:00 Don't Tell The Bride
11:00 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 Orphanage
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 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 Orphanage
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Engineering An Empire
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 Engineering An Empire
06:20 Ancient Top 10
07:10 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
08:00 The Colour Of War
09:00 In Search Of Aliens
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Clash Of The Gods
12:00 Engineering An Empire
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: Ancient Mysteries Solved
19:00 Ancient Top 10
20:00 The Colour Of War
21:00 Hangar I: The UFO Files
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Bible Secrets Revealed



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Restoration
02:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
04:30 Swamp People
10:10 Mountain Men
11:00 Mountain Men
11:50 Mountain Men
12:40 Mountain Men
14:20 Swamp People
15:10 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 Places We Go
02:05 Places We Go
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
 07:10 Places We Go
 08:05 My Pacific Quest
 09:00 Raw Travel
 09:25 Raw Travel
 09:55 The Food Files
 10:20 The Food Files
 10:50 Cruise Ship Diaries
 11:15 Cruise Ship Diaries
 11:45 My Restaurant In India
 12:10 Places We Go
 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 Street Food Around The World
 16:45 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 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 Street Food Around The World
 22:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 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
 04:00 Nazi Megastructures
 05:00 The Indestructibles
 05:30 The Indestructibles
 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 Sea Of Hope: America's Underwater Treasures



00:20 Hyena Coast
 01:10 Monster Croc Wrangler
 01:35 Monster Croc Wrangler
 02:00 Mother Croc
 02:50 Animal Fight Club
 03:45 World's Deadliest
 04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
 05:35 Mother Croc
 06:30 Animal Fight Club
 07:25 World's Deadliest
 08:20 Ultimate Animal Countdown
 09:15 World's Deadliest Snakes
 10:10 South Africa: Cradle Of Killers
 11:05 The World's Most Wanted Leopard
 12:00 Killer Shots
 12:55 Planet Carnivore: Perfect Killers
 13:50 Animal Fight Club

14:45 World's Deadliest
 15:40 Lion Kingdom
 16:35 Pythonathon
 17:30 Urban Jungle: Wilderness Rising
 18:25 Lion Kingdom
 19:20 World's Deadliest
 20:10 Lion Kingdom
 21:00 Pythonathon
 21:50 Urban Jungle: Wilderness Rising
 22:40 Lion Kingdom
 23:30 Killer Shots



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
 18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
 19:00 School Of Rock
 19:24 Game Shakers
 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



00:16 Shimmer And Shine
 00:38 Shimmer And Shine
 01:02 Max & Ruby
 01:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:46 The Day Henry Met
 01:50 The Day Henry Met
 01:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:41 Zack & Quack
 02:51 Kid-E-Cats
 03:03 Shimmer And Shine
 03:24 Nella The Princess Knight
 03:36 Paw Patrol

03:59 Little Charmers
 04:11 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 04:23 Dora The Explorer
 04:46 Max & Ruby
 05:08 The Day Henry Met
 05:14 Nella The Princess Knight
 05:36 Shimmer And Shine
 06:00 Wallykazam!
 06:22 Zack & Quack
 06:33 The Day Henry Met
 06:39 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 07:00 Rusty Rivets
 07:14 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
 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
 13:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 13:47 The Day Henry Met
 13:52 The Day Henry Met
 13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 14:19 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
 17:11 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
 19:37 Dora The Explorer
 20:00 Nella The Princess Knight
 20:10 Kid-E-Cats
 20:21 Bubble Guppies
 20:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 21:07 Paw Patrol
 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



00:05 The Adventure Club
 01:35 Mostly Ghostly: One Night In Doom House
 03:05 A Simple Wish
 04:40 Shelby: The Dog Who Saved Christmas
 06:15 The Adventure Club
 07:45 Mostly Ghostly: One Night In Doom House
 09:15 Because Of Winn Dixie
 11:05 A Simple Wish
 12:40 Scooby-Doo! And WWE: Curse Of Speed Demon
 14:05 Minions
 15:40 Alvin And The Chipmunks: Chipwrecked
 17:10 The Adventures Of Pepper And Paula
 18:45 Operation: Neighborhood Watch
 20:20 Scooby-Doo! And WWE: Curse Of Speed Demon

21:45 Minions
 23:20 The Adventures Of Pepper And Paula



00:35 The Brothers Grimsby
 02:05 A Short History Of Decay
 03:45 The House Bunny
 05:30 My Bakery In Brooklyn
 07:15 Big
 09:05 Big Stone Gap
 10:50 The Family Fang
 12:45 Made In America
 14:40 Big
 16:30 Meet Dave
 18:05 Spy Hard
 19:35 Barbershop: The Next Cut
 21:30 Pitch Perfect 2
 23:25 The Parole Officer



02:00 The Age Of Innocence
 04:30 Me Before You
 06:30 Alex Of Venice
 08:10 The Age Of Innocence
 10:40 Me Before You
 12:40 The Flying Scotsman
 14:30 Waiting For Superman
 16:30 The Salesman
 18:40 To Kill A Mockingbird
 20:50 Things We Lost In The Fire
 22:50 Scent Of A Woman



00:05 Emilie Jolie
 01:30 Phantom Boy
 03:05 Dinofroz Return To The Past World
 04:25 Scooby-Doo! And WWE: Curse Of Speed Demon
 05:55 Last Wizard
 07:20 The Happy Cricket And The Giant Bugs
 08:55 Catcher: Cat City 2
 10:35 Monkey King: The Hero
 12:10 Space Dogs 2: Adventure To The Moon
 13:40 Emilie Jolie
 15:05 Phantom Boy
 16:40 Shopkins - Chef Club
 17:45 Monkey King: The Hero
 19:20 The Fairy Tales Tree
 20:50 Beyond Beyond
 22:20 Shopkins - Chef Club
 23:25 Catcher: Cat City 2



02:20 In The Heart Of The Sea
 04:25 The Lovely Bones
 06:45 The Count Of Monte Cristo
 09:05 This Means War
 10:45 Spooks: The Greater Good
 12:30 In The Heart Of The Sea
 14:35 Eddie The Eagle
 16:25 Changeling
 18:50 It's Complicated
 20:50 The Internship
 22:50 Troy



00:40 Mythbusters: The Search
 01:30 How Do They Do It?
 01:55 Food Factory
 02:20 Mysteries Of The Missing
 03:10 Dangerman
 04:00 Da Vinci's Machines
 04:48 Mythbusters: The Search
 05:36 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Food Factory
 06:24 Mysteries Of The Missing
 07:12 Dangerman
 08:00 How Do They Do It?
 08:26 Da Vinci's Machines
 09:14 Mythbusters: The Search
 10:02 Dangerman
 10:50 How Do They Do It?
 11:14 Food Factory
 11:38 How Things Work
 12:26 Da Vinci's Machines

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



01:30 The Time Being
 03:00 Autumn In New York
 04:45 Night Moves
 06:45 Ask The Dust
 08:45 Scorched
 10:20 The Accidental Husband
 11:50 Get Over It
 13:15 The Third Wheel
 15:00 The Time Being
 16:30 About Adam
 18:00 Runaway Bride
 20:00 Ant-Man
 22:00 Terri
 23:45 The Illusionist



00:00 Married At First Sight
 01:00 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
 07:00 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
 13:00 Married At First Sight
 14:00 Mistresses
 15:00 Fashion Star
 16:00 MAFS: The First Year
 17:00 Mistresses
 18:00 Devious Maids
 19:00 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 Ultimate Shopper
 05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
 06:00 7 Little Johnstons
 06:45 7 Little Johnstons
 07:30 7 Little Johnstons
 08:15 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 09:00 Say Yes To The Dress
 09:25 Extreme Cheapskates
 09:47 Extreme Cheapskates
 10:10 Extreme Cheapskates
 10:32 Extreme Cheapskates
 10:55 Love, Lust Or Run
 11:17 Love, Lust Or Run
 11:40 Love, Lust Or Run
 12:02 Love, Lust Or Run
 12:25 Love, Lust Or Run
 12:47 Love, Lust Or Run
 13:10 Iyanla: Fix My Life
 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 14:40 Cake Boss
 15:02 Cake Boss
 15:25 Cake Boss
 15:47 Cake Boss

16:10 Cake Boss
 16:35 Cake Boss
 17:00 Hodges Half Dozen
 17:50 Save My Style
 18:20 Save My Style
 18:50 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 19:40 Cake Boss
 20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
 20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
 21:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 21:50 Little People, Big World
 22:40 The Undateables
 23:30 Return To Amish



00:00 Mysteries At The Museum Specials
 01:00 Ghost Hunters International
 02:00 Mysteries At The Museum
 03:00 Mysteries At The Museum
 04:00 Top Secret Swimming Holes
 05:00 Mysteries At The Museum Specials
 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



00:05 Detroiters
 00:30 Idiotsitter
 00:55 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
 04:40 Workaholics
 05:05 Workaholics
 05:30 Workaholics
 05:55 Workaholics
 06:20 Workaholics
 06:50 The Jim Gaffigan Show
 08:55 Punk'd (Bet)
 09:20 Punk'd (Bet)
 09:45 Important Things With Demetri Martin
 10:10 Important Things With Demetri Martin
 10:35 Important Things With Demetri 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

Stars

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

Aries, you will feel very glad to be alive and blessed with the advantages you have in your life. Something will cause you to be far more appreciative of, and humbled by, your position. Watch that you don't overindulge in shopping trips for now. Enjoy a visit to the museum or park. You will effortlessly infuse your projects with your unique personality. Enjoy a favorite pastime later today. Your moods change like the sun, enjoying foods and customs from all over the world. You are a born communicator; you are happiest when everyone is on the same page. No matter what you do today or this evening your one of a kind energy will attract attention from new people; your time has come to shine, Aries.

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

Taurus, you will receive compliments and encouragement from coworkers and family members. You may feel exceptionally well balanced and the ability to reach out to others with encouragement is strong. Your opinion of which direction to take could change as former ways of doing things no longer promote forward movement. You long for a legacy that is written in stone and unbreakable. There should be no complications or interruptions while performing tasks that require concentration. You could try doing something in a new way. You may feel more in tune with your work. Move your body today by walking, bicycling or yoga. Later, prepare a wonderful dinner and desert for family and company, Taurus.

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

Gemini, the stars are aligned for fun times with family, friends and acquaintances. You are satisfied and happy with your place in life and the people in it; a grateful energy surrounds you. This is a great time to tie up any loose ends you may have personally or professionally. You will be held in high esteem for the things you do for others. Someone listens to your views today and completely agrees. Friends will approach you about working on a project that could be problematic; your methods and opinions are highly respected. Your appreciation of family and friends is heartwarming. Blockages and complications will finally be cleared. After a very busy day, relax with those you love and enjoy this evening, Gemini.

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

Cancer, remember the old adage mind over matter when you encounter difficult situations today. A temper tantrum might be appealing, but for the sake of your own peace of mind make every effort to avoid one. Tension can work against you, exhausting your vitality. You may be able to work with a group of people to figure out exactly what they want to do regarding a difficult project. Friends want to share some time with you doing something carefree and just plain old fun! Remember to stop and smell the roses; it's important especially now. Domestic projects could get out of hand if some of the responsibilities are not shared. This way you will be able to free up some time for more productive activities or perhaps a needed break, Cancer.

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

Leo, you will desire new people, places and things; perhaps a new professional position tempts you now. You will feel very strongly that you can pursue anything your heart desires during this cycle. You may feel that you would like to do something on a deep level that helps people in a hard situation. Some issues could light a fuse and cause you to get into an argument with someone who has different views; try to remember, fiery Leo, that everyone is entitled their opinion. You could feel like breaking free for a little social nightlife with friends; beware that you could do something to offend someone you care for. An important discussion with family or friends you are close to could make a wonderful, positive ending to a very long day, Leo.

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

Virgo, you may come across as bossy when you make your feeling known regarding a situation affecting several people. This is a perfect time to incorporate past lessons into your present circumstances; remember when we don't learn the same things keep happening. You will see someone you haven't even thought of in years. It could appear that the more you try, the worse things disintegrate before your eyes. There will likely be a confrontation with someone over who should had done what. Step back and watch patiently as things work themselves out. You can't force the river to run backward and you can't force people to change their views to match yours. This evening will offer an opportunity for recharging your body and spirit for another day, Virgo.

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

Libra, your private interests will go deeply into the whys of what people do; discovering motivations will show clearly who is calling all of the shots in a certain project. You could be called on to create an advertisement or public service announcement; you will intuitively know which approach will appeal to audiences. You may need to make choices for an elder or perhaps a child. Your judgment will be perfect in this. You could see something today that will make you send up thanks for your own circumstances in life. You may be in the mood for deep and penetrating conversations or thoughts this afternoon. There may be a new and exciting way to make some good money on the side, so keep your eyes peeled and your ears open, Libra.

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

Scorpio, when you are at the right place at the right time the constellations conspire to send magical results. You will have the midas touch today, meaning all you put your hand to will prosper. Should someone try to slip you up, your words will serve as the perfect defensive tools. There are some petty, niggling little things that could pester you but you will put those to rest quickly. You can get what you want if you use your winning personality with a certain customer or client. Your help on a difficult assignment will pay off later. An investment you made will show promise for the long term. Excellent trends exist for new interests. Overall, your situation seems happy and healthy and becoming more fulfilling each day, Scorpio.

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

Sagittarius, a strong energy of looking back is present in this cycle; are you perhaps attending a graduation or perhaps a class reunion legacy is another thought repeating through your mind and you admittedly want to leave one. Family and other close ties are at the forefront of your contentment and you find great joy here. You are interested in the concept of give and take, it's all right to take occasionally, you know! You could feel more interested in staying close to home today, but hold on the weekend is almost here. Your intuitive thinking may lead you to work on a difficult relationship in or near your own home this evening. Your empathy is closely tied to someone this evening, perhaps to a difficult degree. End the day your way, rest well, Sagittarius.

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

Capricorn, you will find yourself in a position of learning today. Your ideas and solutions don't coincide with others and they state their opinions clearly. You could want to retreat into your daydream mode but circumstances won't allow it. Directions taken in the past could be the problem here. A new hobby is on the horizon; you will participate with a like-minded person. There could be conflict with a younger person. You will get through the day's obstacles only to face more this evening. Others could want to impose their opinions and advise; your humor fades as does your patience. Something fun and distracting is in order for the evening with someone who gets you and your moods; take a deep breath, Capricorn, tomorrow is another day.

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

Aquarius, you could experience a strong effort to keep things equalized and stable on the home front. Two sides of a situation demand to be pleased; you will use your best judgment here. You could discover that your thoughts are in the opposite vein of a stubborn elder; you will soon find ways to create a healthy balance. You will have an opportunity to learn more about a possible investment. It would be to your advantage to seek out like-minded people who have the same goals. You could feel dominant urges to create something unique with modern lines. Approach this with confidence and without succumbing to inhibitions. Your work will take on its own life and evolve along with you. Rest well tonight, Aquarius.

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

Pisces, a sense of peace and calm will manifest through the day and evening. Solid personal and work environments are a big part of your fulfillment and happiness; you are one to have a grateful heart. You may find that you are on a financial high, as though you have the midas touch. Now might be a good time to move forward with larger purchases such as a home or vehicle; could be an expensive piece of jewelry showing up soon. A young person will seek your help in an important matter that could affect his or her life for years to come. Your experience with an unpleasant event will serve to help you later today in an unexpected meeting. You will get to the bottom of something that will help clear up some bad feelings with someone you care for, 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	Malajorca	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

First monkeys cloned by process that made Dolly the sheep

BEIJING: Scientists in China have created the first monkeys cloned by the same process that produced Dolly the sheep more than 20 years ago, a breakthrough that could boost medical research into human diseases. The two long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*) named Hua Hua and Zhong Zhong were born at the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) Institute of Neuroscience in Shanghai, and are the fruits of years of research into a cloning technique called somatic cell nuclear transfer.

"The barrier has been broken by this work," co-author Muming Poo, director of the Institute of Neuroscience of CAS Center for Excellence in Brain Science and Intelligence Technology,

said. Until now, the technique has been used to clone more than 20 different animal species, including dogs, pigs and cats, but primates have proven particularly difficult.

The birth of the now six and eight-week old macaque babies also raises ethical questions about how close scientists have come to one day cloning humans. Humans could be cloned by this technique, in principle, said Poo, though this team's focus was on cloning for medical research. One day, the approach might be used to create large populations of genetically identical monkeys that could be used for medical research-and avoid taking monkeys from the wild.

"In the United States alone they are importing 30,000 to 40,000 monkeys each year by drug companies," said Poo. "Their genetic backgrounds are all variable, they are not identical, so you need a large number of monkeys. For ethical reasons I think having cloned monkey will greatly reduce the (number of) monkeys used for drug tests." Monkeys are commonly used in medical research on brain diseases like Parkinson's, cancer, immune and metabolic disorders.

"The method used for these experiments is similar to that used to clone Dolly," in 1996 but with several "updates," said William Ritchie, an embryologist on the team that cloned Dolly the

sheep at the Roslin Institute of the University of Edinburgh. The process involves removing the nucleus from a healthy egg, and replacing it with another nucleus from another type of body cell. The clone becomes the same as the creature that donated the replacement nucleus.

"We tried several different methods, but only one worked," said senior author Qiang Sun, Director of the Nonhuman Primate Research Facility at the Chinese Academy of Sciences Institute of Neurosciences. "There was much failure before we found a way to successfully clone a monkey." Adult donor cells were attempted, but those clones died within hours of birth. —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





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Kuwait Times Classifieds

Friday, January 26, 2018

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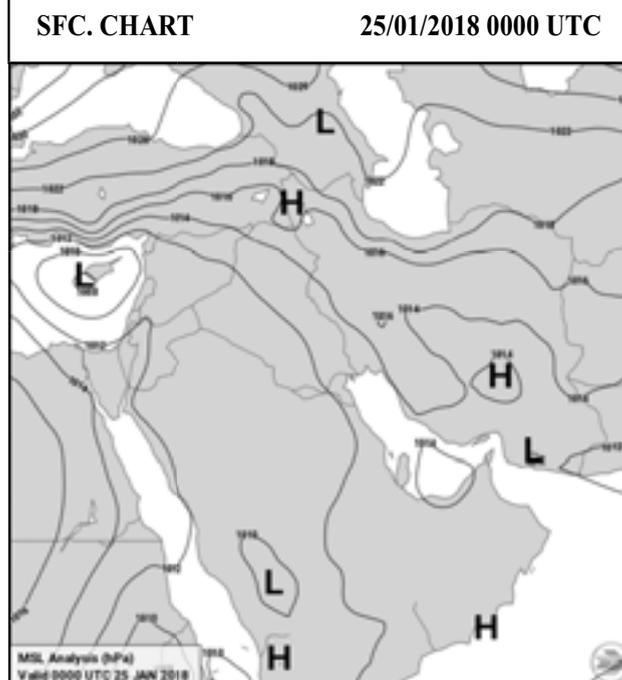
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually south easterly wind to southerly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	14 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	25 °C	08 °C
ABDALY	25 °C	07 °C
BUBYAN	00 °C	00 °C
JAHRA	25 °C	11 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	23 °C	11 °C
SALMIYAH	21 °C	15 °C
AHMADI	19 °C	14 °C
NUWAISIB	25 °C	12 °C
WAFRA	25 °C	09 °C
SALMY	26 °C	09 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	01/26	Partly cloudy to cloudy	27 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	12 - 35 km/h
Saturday	01/27	Fair	20 °C	06 °C	NW-N	12 - 42 km/h
Sunday	01/28	Rather cool	18 °C	04 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Monday	01/29	Rather cool	19 °C	05 °C	NW	12 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:19
Sunrise	06:41
Zuhr	12:00
Asr	15:00
Sunset	17:20
Isha	18:40

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	91 %
MIN. RH	19 %
MAX. Wind	NW 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Obanapu Usharani, holder of Indian Passport No. J2199214 issued at Hyderabad, India on 04/11/2010 w/o Obulapu Sankar Reddy shall henceforth be known as Obulapu Usharani w/o Sankar Reddy Obulapu, for the purpose of correction of wrong entries mentioned in my passport.
23-1-2018

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

EMERGENCY

112

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2018

39 German economy in party mood despite political woes



40 Smooth-talking Draghi hopes to fend off currency war



41 Leader to laggard: UK economy loses ground after Brexit vote



DAVOS: US President Donald Trump and Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May attend a bilateral meeting during the World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, eastern Switzerland. —AFP

Trump takes 'America First' mantra to Davos

Trump hails 'great relationship' with UK's May

DAVOS: The world's political and business elite headed yesterday into a compelling encounter with President Donald Trump as the United States bids to carve out a competitive edge in trade, taxes and currency rates. Trump, who has made "America First" the touchstone of his year-old administration, arrived by helicopter at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss Alpine village of Davos, after touching down in Zurich aboard Air Force One. Before leaving Washington, Trump tweeted that he intended in Davos "to tell the world how great America is and is doing." "Our economy is now booming and with all I am doing, will only get better...Our country is finally WINNING again!" he said, after demonizing the globalist Davos crowd en route to the White House. Other government leaders and business tycoons in Davos are agog at the tempestuous course of US policy under Trump, who is due to address the forum on its closing day today at the end of a week that saw his administration announce a new package of trade tariffs and spark turmoil on the currency markets.

"I think the most fascinating thing with President Trump is that he has the capacity to surprise, and I'm sure we will be surprised tomorrow," Alexander Stubb, former prime minister of Finland and the new vice president of the European Investment Bank, said in Davos. Traders and US partners already got one surprise in Davos this week when Trump's Treasury secretary, Steven Mnuchin, appeared to back away from decades of support by his predecessors for a "strong dollar" policy by declaring "a weaker dollar is good for us".

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde yesterday

urged Mnuchin to "clarify" his stance on the dollar, which slumped on his remarks. A weak dollar would potentially boost US exporters but cause headaches for all other trading nations. Mnuchin yesterday said he was relaxed about the dollar's short-term value, doing little to help the reeling unit recover on foreign exchange markets.

"We are not concerned with where the dollar is in the short term, it is a very liquid market and we believe in free currencies," the Treasury chief told reporters. Mnuchin's comments were taken as reinforcing a broad offensive in trade built on the "America First" platform, drawing the ire of French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire. "We want exchange rates to reflect economic fundamentals ... and we shouldn't play with these rates," he said in Davos.

Race to the bottom

The new tariffs imposed this week on solar panels and large washing machines, which infuriated China and South Korea, combined with big cuts to the US corporate tax are accentuating foreign concern that the United States is abandoning its role as protector of the global trade order. Business leaders in Davos have this week given a broad welcome to Trump's controversial tax reforms, but European political leaders fear a "race to the bottom" as the United States gains in appeal to foreign investors.

Aside from his speech, Trump will hold meetings yesterday with the British and Israeli prime ministers, both of whom are due to address the forum, as well as Rwandan President Paul Kagame today. With Kagame,

who currently chairs the African Union, Trump will likely try to turn a page on his reported derogatory comment about "shithole" African countries. For her part, British leader Theresa May will encourage activist investors to pressure social media firms into clamping down on fake news, hate speech and sexual harassment, according to excerpts of her speech released by Downing Street.

Nice or nasty?

A year ago, the Davos spotlight was claimed by China's communist leader Xi Jinping, who took up the torch of global trade to the delight of the well-heeled audience then anxious about Trump's impending inauguration. The Davos elite are keen now to see which version of Trump will show up—the business-friendly tycoon or the leader who berated the rest of the world at the UN General Assembly last September.

"I think they've already built down their expectations so far that anything he may say that's conciliatory, they'll be grateful for," Robert Kaplan, senior fellow at Washington's Center for a New American Security, said at the forum.

"Yes, people like the fact that markets are high and America has reformed its taxes, but people are very nervous about geopolitics around the world and they are very nervous partially because of Trump," he said. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel "stole the show" at Davos already, Kaplan added, after the European leaders used separate speeches on Wednesday to push back hard against the Trump manifesto.—AFP

Business

ECB meets as euro hits three-year high

Sterling at highest in six months

LONDON: The euro steadied at a three-year high yesterday and shares inched back as traders waited to see if the European Central Bank would try to cool the currency's hottest run in nearly four years. Concerns about US protectionism kept the dollar weak after its worst day in six months, but it was the ECB's first meeting of 2018, and when it will end its 2.6 trillion euro stimulus program, that was attracting attention.

Another challenge facing policymakers is how to address the euro's surge - it hit a three-year high of over \$1.24 yesterday - as this could dampen inflation and endanger the work done by years of unprecedented stimulus. Euro zone bonds were again reducing the premium offered by former debt crisis countries like Greece, Portugal and Spain compared with ultra-safe German debt, but it will be a delicate balancing act for ECB chief Mario Draghi.

Oil prices, which are a major driver of inflation, hit \$71 per barrel in Asian trading for the first time since 2014. "The rate of change (in the euro) might make the ECB a little uncomfortable," said State Street's head of EMEA macro strategy, Tim Graf. "They can't push back too much on the fruits of their success, but you may well get comments around excessive currency volatility."

The uncertainty about the ECB made for a quiet start for European shares. The pan-European STOXX 600 barely budged as Germany's exporter-heavy DAX index fell 0.2 percent to offset small gains on London's FTSE and France's CAC 40.

Trading updates saw drinks giant Diageo warn its sales were being crimped by the resurgent pound. Sterling hit its highest in six months against the euro yesterday, having also bounded back to its pre-Brexit vote levels against the dol-

Trade war fears temper emerging equity gains but currencies fly

LONDON: Renewed fears of trade wars stemming from US protectionism capped gains in emerging market equities on Thursday but the weak dollar helped some currencies rise to multi-year peaks, led by the Chinese yuan. MSCI's benchmark emerging stocks index edged up a touch, taking a breather after gaining almost 9 percent year-to-date to approach 10-year highs. Caution has crept in after US President Donald Trump imposed steep import tariffs on washing machines and solar panels, fanning fears of a trade war.

lar this week. In the tech sector, Software AG fell 3.7 percent as it reported a drop in core profits, while Nordic bank Nordea's results also proved a drag.

Trade war games?

Asian trading had been a mixed bag, with many of the moves driven by the weakening of the dollar. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan touched an all-time peak for the ninth session in a row, but Japan's Nikkei fell 1.1 percent, hit by the yen's latest jump against the greenback. MSCI ACWI, the index provider's broadest gauge of the world's stock markets, consolidated its more than 6.5 percent gains for the month.

A new Reuters poll of over 500 economists showed the global economy is expected to grow at the fastest pace since 2010. The upbeat mood, however, has come up against renewed fears of protectionism by the United States after President Donald Trump's decision to impose steep import tariffs on washing machines and solar panels earlier in the week.

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, hinted at other measures against China too on Wednesday, saying at the annual Davos meeting that Washington was investigating whether there was a case for taking action over China's infringements of intellectual property. Trump is scheduled to speak in Davos yesterday. Also in the Swiss Alpine town, US Treasury Secretary

Steven Mnuchin made a major departure from traditional US currency policy on Wednesday, saying "obviously a weaker dollar is good for us as it relates to trade and opportunities." Analysts say they cannot remember any US Treasury Secretary openly embracing a cheaper dollar, at least in the last two decades or so. "I

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross has also hinted at action against China, citing a "direct threat" in high tech goods. China said it did not pursue protectionist policies. "In a world that looks benign for emerging markets, the biggest risk is probably a US-China trade war," said Tim Ash, a strategist at BlueBay Asset Management. "We've had a very long run in EM without a correction so could this be the trigger?" Trump is due to speak at the Davos forum today.

Chinese mainland shares fell 0.6 percent, easing from two-year highs, and Hong Kong stocks fell 0.9 percent, their biggest one-day fall in a month. But other Asian manufacturing hubs pushed higher, with South Korea shares up almost 1 percent to close at a record high. The index was boosted by chipmaker SK Hynix, which gained 4.7 percent after it posted a record profit. Samsung Electronics also rose nearly 2 percent.

Many emerging currencies hit multi-year highs against the dollar which is languishing near three-year low after US Treasury Secre-



TOKYO: A pedestrian walks past an electronics stock indicator in the window of a securities company displaying the morning closing numbers at the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo.—AFP

was speculating the Trump administration may role out something with fanfare given its big delegation to Davos," said Masayuki Kichikawa, chief macro strategist at Sumitomo Mitsui Asset Management.

"I'd think the real aim of Mnuchin's comments on the dollar is not so much engineering a weaker dollar per se as putting pressure on trading partners to do some trade deals with the administration," he added. The dollar's index against a basket of six major currencies tumbled to a three-year low of 88.816 before steadying

in European trading. It has fallen 1.9 percent so far this week.

The dollar had also slipped to as far as 108.74 yen, its lowest since mid-September, and to its weakest against the Chinese yuan since November 2015. It is on course for its biggest ever monthly fall against the yuan. "They (the US administration) can either have tariffs with the rest of the world or do it organically through a nice depreciation of the dollar," said JP Morgan Asset Management's chief European markets strategist Karen Ward.—Reuters



GEORGIA: A shepherd herds sheep in a valley in Georgia's Kakheti region.—AFP

tary Steven Mnuchin departed from traditional U.S. currency policy saying "obviously a weaker dollar is good for us". China's yuan firmed to its strongest since November 2015 for its biggest one-day rise in almost two years. It has gained 2.7 percent against the sliding dollar so far this year, following a rise of about 6.8 percent in 2017, and is set for its biggest monthly gain ever.

"As long as the dollar weakness persists, the Chinese authorities will let the currency

fly," Commerzbank analysts wrote. The Malaysian ringgit climbed 0.5 percent to a near two-year peak after the central bank raised rates for the first time in 3-1/2 years. The baht hit four-year highs. But the weak dollar failed to help the South African rand, which fell 0.4 percent from 2-1/2 year highs after a strong run. The Turkish lira also remained under pressure, with Trump warning Turkey to curtail its military operation in Syria.—Reuters

Business

German economy in party mood despite political woes

Two sides to begin formal coalition talks

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German companies and consumers are starting the new year brimming with confidence, two key surveys found yesterday, signaling that Europe's purring top economy is unfazed by Berlin's slow path to a new government. German business morale in January recovered from last month's dip to climb back to the same record-high level seen in November, the Ifo economic institute said, surpassing analyst expectations.

At the same time, a forward-looking survey by market research GfK forecast that consumer confidence has risen to its highest level since 2001, buoyed by record-low unemployment and expectations of wage hikes. "At the beginning of the new year, it's all hunky-dory in the German economy," said economist Carsten Brzeski of ING Diba bank. The latest readings send "a strong signal that the current political impasse in Berlin has no impact on the economy at all," he added. Chancellor Angela Merkel has been struggling to form a government ever since a tricky election four months ago left her conservative bloc without an obvious coalition partner.

A first attempt to cobble together an unprecedented three-way alliance with two smaller parties collapsed in November, forcing Merkel to coax the reluctant centre-left Social Democrats into a re-

newed grand coalition. The two sides will begin formal coalition talks in coming days, paving the way for a government to be in place by mid-March. But a positive outcome is far from guaranteed as the Social Democrats have promised to give their 440,000 rank-and-file members the final say on any coalition deal.

Wage demands grow louder

Shrugging off the political uncertainty, the Munich-based Ifo institute's business climate index jumped from last month's 117.2 points to 117.6 points. The jump brought the index back to November's historic peak, Ifo said, after upwardly revising its reading for that month. Analysts surveyed by Factset had predicted the index would be unchanged from December. "The German economy made a dynamic start to the year," Ifo president Clemens Fuest said in a statement.

Ifo's survey of some 7,000 firms showed that businesses were more optimistic about their current economic situation than last month, while expectations for the future dropped slightly "but remain at a high level". The Ifo reading is in step with the bright mood seen among German shoppers, with GfK forecasting that consumer confidence will inch upwards in February. "The

“ It's all hunky-dory in the German economy ”



GERMANY: Mist hangs over the Koenigssee lake in Schoenau am Koenigssee, southern Germany. —AFP

euphoria can be explained above all by the continuing excellent situation on the labor market," GfK noted.

Raised hopes for an end to the political deadlock in Berlin "could also have given an extra push to economic expectations", the pollsters added. Meanwhile, demands by leading German unions for higher pay and better conditions after years of "wage moderation" may have helped boost consumers' income expectations, GfK said. Other recent indicators on the German economic

dashboard have also been in the green, with official figures showing the country notched up growth of 2.2 percent last year.

Looking ahead, Brzeski said the biggest risks to the German economy came from the outside, notably in the form of US tax reforms and the threat of rising protectionism around the globe. "New structural reforms and new private and public investments are needed to safeguard the currently strong domestic momentum of the German economy," he said.—AFP

China goes on tech-hiring binge and wages soar, closing gap with Silicon Valley

BEIJING: China's war for technology talent is intensifying. Tens of thousands of people are being hired to shore up cybersecurity, help censor online content, and try to make China No.1 in the application of artificial intelligence (AI), as capital pours into both start-ups and more mature businesses at a time when the government is demanding rapid development. "Companies are well-funded and are in serious competition for talent," said Thomas Liang, a former executive at Chinese search giant Baidu who is now running an AI-focused fund. He said that startups in hot sectors like AI often have to offer 50-100 percent pay raises to attract employees away from established technology firms.

China's emergence as a global centre for technology, with champions such as Alibaba and Tencent now worth more than a trillion dollars combined, has led to a hiring boom and wage growth that starts to put salaries for the top talent within striking distance of those offered in Silicon Valley. And while that should please the Chinese government as it seeks to create higher-paying jobs and move up the value-chain, it could also add to income inequality in China as wages in non-tech jobs lag, and as the sector's recruitment and income gains tend to be concentrated in the biggest cities such as Beijing and Shenzhen.

Technology is certainly a major driver of growth in China. Output in China's information technology and software sector expanded by 33.8 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter, compared with 29 percent growth in the third quarter, according to data from the statistics bureau.



COLOGNE: Employees of car manufacturer Ford hold a banner of the metalworkers' union IG Metall while taking part in a warning strike in Cologne, western Germany. —AFP

In China, top graduates working on AI can command salaries of 300,000 yuan to 600,000 yuan a year, according to tech recruitment website 100offer.com, while team leaders with three-to-five years of experience can make more than 1.5 million yuan annually. Many of these jobs are in Beijing or Shenzhen.

Liang estimates salaries in the industry have roughly doubled since 2014. By comparison, an AI researcher in San Francisco makes an average of \$112,659 a year, and a machine learning engineer in the same city an average \$150,815, according to job search site Indeed.com. For Chinese software engineers who have studied in the US but now worry about the impact of US President Donald Trump's immigration policies on their chances of retaining visas, returning home is becoming more appealing. —Reuters

Talks break down in German metalworkers labor dispute

BERLIN: A labor dispute between German industry and the powerful metalworkers' union threatens to escalate with bouts of 24-hour strike action next week after talks with employers broke down. Leaders of IG Metall, Europe's biggest labor union, and of German employers' groups were to meet Thursday to decide on the course ahead. IG Metall demands a six-percent pay rise and the right for all workers to temporarily switch from a 35-hour to a 28-hour week.

It also wants companies to make up some of the salary shortfall for those workers who reduce their hours to care for children or elderly relatives. Employers fear that hundreds of thousands could opt to go part-time, leaving factory floors bare, and argue that the change would be unfair to those who have already taken a pay cut when switching to shorter hours. The two sides had met until late Wednesday in the southern city of Boeblingen before talks broke down.

"Unfortunately, IG Metall made demands that are unreasonable for our companies," said employers' representative Stefan Wolf, national news agency DPA reported. Union representative Roman Zitzelsberger said that "we offered compromises on all contentious issues and did everything to avoid a phase of escalation". IG Metall has since January 8 launched "warning strikes", or work stoppages of a few hours each, at 785 sites, and mobilized 910,000 strikers, according to the union. —AFP

Business

Smooth-talking Draghi hopes to fend off currency war

‘Draghi to adopt a damage limitation mode’

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: A euro at three-year highs against the dollar will have financial markets hanging on European Central Bank president Mario Draghi's every word yesterday, putting pressure on him to play down talk of reducing stimulus to the eurozone economy. US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin raised the stakes for Draghi on Wednesday with comments undermining the greenback.

“Obviously a weaker dollar is good for us, it's good because it has to do with trade and opportunities,” Mnuchin said, helping send the euro to its highest level against the dollar since December 2014 on Wednesday. The former banker walked back the comments yesterday by insisting the Trump administration “believe in free currencies” and was “not concerned with where the dollar is in the short term”.

But the market reaction highlighted how tricky it will be for the ECB to wean the eurozone off mass bond-buying and ultimately raise interest rates in the coming months and years. Mnuchin's remarks came after the single currency was already stoked by the minutes of the ECB's December meeting, which revealed governors plan to “re-visit” policy early this year. The ECB's almost 2.3 trillion euros in purchases of government

and corporate bonds, cheap loans to banks and historic low interest rates have aimed to fire eurozone growth and boost inflation towards its target of just below 2.0 percent.

Growth has indeed picked up—estimated at 2.4 percent in 2017 — but inflation stood at just 1.4 percent in December. In what the Frankfurt institution says is a side effect—but critics allege is by design—its policy has also suppressed the value of the euro against other currencies, supporting growth by encouraging exports and inflation by making imports more expensive.

A pricier euro could slow the ECB's quest to complete its mission, although some analysts argue there is little it can do to brake the currency's rise. Following Mnuchin's comments, “Draghi is likely to adopt a damage limitation mode” and tear

up any plans he had to hint at winding down support, ING Diba bank economist Rob Carnell said yesterday. “Throwing more fuel on the fire... would be counter-productive,” he added.

No choice but to move

In the ECB boardroom, strong economic fundamentals prompted some central bank governors to argue at December's meeting that



FRANKFURT: Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank (ECB) addresses a press conference following the meeting of the ECB's Governing Council in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. —AFP

“a policy stance that remained in crisis configuration” was no longer needed. Policymakers decided in October to cut bond-buying by half to 30 billion euros per month from January and set a time limit of September. “We can be hopeful that the October extension was the last one,” ECB executive board member Benoit Coeure told German business daily Handelsblatt in November.

Council members favoring a prolonged, gentle exit from bond-buying are holding off

more aggressive “hawks”, as the bank approaches technical limits to bond-buying that could open it to legal challenge. Such constraints mean “the ECB is resigning itself to the inevitable” as it prepares to wind down bond-buying, Commerzbank economist Michael Schubert noted. If the ECB halts asset purchases sooner than September, an interest rate rise-slated in ECB statements for “well after” the end of bond-buying—could also be moved up the agenda.—AFP

“Believe in free currencies”

Russia ready to regulate, not ban cryptocurrencies

MOSCOW: Russia's Finance Ministry said yesterday it was working on legislation to regulate cryptocurrency transactions without fully banning them or legalizing digital FX as a means of payment in Russia. Russia had initially said it would ban crypto-currencies as they could be used to launder money and finance terrorism. But as such currencies and particularly Bitcoin grew popular worldwide, Russian authorities have changed tack.

The ministry said it had prepared a bill that would permit trade in cryptocurrencies through digital exchanges which met certain conditions and would also cover initial coin offerings (ICOs). Doing this, the ministry said, would reduce the risk of fraud and make it possible to tax cryptocurrency transactions to support the state budget. The ministry highlighted that digital currencies and tokens would not be allowed to replace the Russian rouble.

“It should be noted, that the use of cryptocurrencies in the territory of the Russian Federation as a means of payment is not being suggested,” the ministry said in a statement. Authorities around the world, particularly in Asia, have attempted to rein in the global boom in trading bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies — a form of digital money created and maintained by its users. —Reuters

GDP: Gross Domestic Problem?

DAVOS: It can topple governments, confer international bragging rights and pretty much obsessed the government of China once the country began its long march back to economic prowess. But is GDP (gross domestic product) outliving its usefulness as a metric of economic size, and is it stoking social and environmental crisis by encouraging growth at any cost? Debate about whether it is time to adopt a more nuanced calculator has been growing in recent years, and featured anew during discussions at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos this week.

“There's emerging agreement that the kind of statistics we've used in the past just aren't working anymore,” British economist Diane Coyle from the University of Manchester said in Davos. Coyle is one of several experts who have written books on the subject. Others have detailed proposals such as a “Human Development Index”, and a new addition to the literature comes this week from Financial Times journalist David Pilling, entitled “The Growth Delusion”. In Davos, Coyle outlined new thinking that would supplement brute economic data with measurements covering human capital (skills and education), physical infrastructure and “intangible capital” such as computerized data and patents. They would also cover environmental quality, and “social capital” looking at how united or divided a country is.

Ascribing a value to data is particularly pressing as companies and customers increasingly transact their lives “in the cloud”. To take one example, a globally accessible and hugely useful resource like Wikipedia is worth precisely zero in traditional GDP accounting models. Neither does GDP encompass the black market, omitting a huge source of activity and income in many developing countries, including in Africa and Latin America.

The politics of GDP

Notably, GDP cannot measure the distribution of wealth within a country. So while its total value can go up, gains are all too often skewed to top earners. Those lower down the ladder can fall further behind in relative terms. That is exactly what has been playing out in the United States, powering a populist backlash that elected Donald Trump, and influencing the British people's decision to quit the European Union.

After the Brexit referendum campaign, pro-EU campaigner Anand Menon wrote that he was trying to explain at one event about the hit to GDP that he felt would come if Britons voted to leave the bloc. He said that one woman in the audience in Newcastle, northern England, shouted back “that's your bloody GDP, not ours”. Developed in 1934 by economist Simon Kuznets to help the United States chart an escape from the Great Depression, GDP measures the total value of a country's goods and services over quarters and years. Woe betide a government that heads into an election on the back of a recession—usually defined as two consecutive quarters of decline in its GDP. But even where there is growth, disenchantment with how it is shared out can be seen vividly in Brexit-bound Britain, according to Inga Beale, chief executive of Lloyd's of London, the insurance market. “We've got to find another mechanism to include much bigger parts of the population, and use different metrics to measure success of a country,” she told CNBC television.

GDP is widely seen as a blunt instrument to measure growth, and has attracted criticism from Nobel prize winners Joseph Stiglitz and Amartya Sen, and International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde, among others. But countries that do execute sustained rises in GDP can use the accreted wealth to transform their standing. Exhibit A is China, which after decades of pell-mell growth is now the world's second-biggest economy as measured by GDP, awarding it the kind of international prestige and influence that it has not enjoyed for centuries. —AFP

Business

Leader to laggard: UK economy loses ground after Brexit vote

Britain slower than other G7 countries

LONDON: Britain's economy has fared better than the gloomy expectations made at the time of the 2016 Brexit vote, but it has been helped mainly by a strong pick-up in global growth and many of its peers are growing more quickly. Britain is at risk, along with Japan and Italy, of being the slowest growing economy among the Group of Seven nations in 2018, Reuters polls of economists showed last week. Following is a summary of how Britain's economic performance compares with that of other rich nations.



Britain at risk, along with Japan and Italy

Growth

Britain grew more slowly than every other G7 country over the first three quarters of 2017. It looks likely to lag behind both France and Germany in the next few years, according to Reuters polls, the International Monetary Fund and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. That would represent a reversal of Britain's out-performance of its peers since the early 1990s, barring a couple of years after the global financial crisis.

Official figures due today are likely to show Britain's economy grew by a quarterly 0.4 percent in the last three months of 2017, repeating

the July-September performance, according to a Reuters poll. That would probably leave average annual growth for 2017 as a whole at around 1.6 percent—much better than the 1.2 percent Reuters poll forecast from this time last year, but compared with around 2.5 percent for Germany, 2.3 percent for the United States, and 1.8 percent for France. The Reuters poll pegs growth for this year at around 1.4 percent ahead of Brexit in March 2019, compared with 2.6 percent for the United States, 2.4 percent for Germany, 2.0 percent for France and 1.3 percent for Japan.

Exports

Export volumes from Britain have jumped over the last 18 months but much of the increase is probably linked to the recovery in the global economy, rather than any increase in British competitiveness. Britain's recent export performance is average compared with other European countries, offering no clear sign of any edge gained from the weak pound.

Consumer confidence

While consumer morale in the euro zone has hit a 17-1/2-year high, the British public is more



LONDON: A pro-European Union (EU), anti-Brexit demonstrator holds the EU and UK flags outside the Houses of Parliament, in central London.—AFP

sombre, particularly about the economic outlook. Higher inflation has hurt the spending power of consumers, especially since wages have failed to keep pace with prices. Consumer confidence in Britain was weaker in December

than in all other large European economies, according to European Commission data. The Thomson Reuters/Ipsos consumer sentiment survey shows Britain was the only G7 country where confidence fell over 2017.—AFP

US, Mexican unions to file NAFTA complaint over labor bill

MONTREAL: US and Mexican unions will formally complain to the US Labor Department yesterday that Mexico continues to violate NAFTA's weak labor standards, a move that they hope will persuade US negotiators to push for stronger rules. The AFL-CIO told Reuters that it and Mexico's UNT were filing the complaint with the US office that oversees the labor accord attached to the North American Free Trade Agreement as US, Canadian, and Mexican negotiators met in Montreal to try to modernize the 1994 trade pact. The complaint, seen by Reuters, argues that Mexico's proposed labor law amendments to implement constitutional reforms will violate the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation. It seeks efforts from the United States to prevent the measures from being implemented and to demand changes to bring Mexico into compliance.

"Simply by promoting this bill, which aims to undermine the constitutional reforms, the government of Mexico brazenly violates the central obligations of the NAALC - namely to 'provide high labor standards' and to 'strive to improve those standards,'" the AFL-CIO and Mexico's UNT National Workers Union said in the complaint. Talks to overhaul the trade deal have been dogged by US threats to withdraw from the pact, but the foreign ministers of Mexico and Canada yesterday struck an upbeat note on future



ONTARIO: This file photo shows the Mexican, US and Canadian flags in the lobby where the third round of the NAFTA renegotiations took place in Ottawa, Ontario.—AFP

negotiations. A key complaint is that NAFTA has failed to lift chronically low Mexican wages that have steadily drawn U.S. and Canadian factories and jobs to Mexico.—Reuters

Keppel laments 'painful chapter' as profits hit

SINGAPORE: Singapore's Keppel, the world's biggest oil rig builder, vowed yesterday to put a "painful chapter" behind it as the company revealed a huge fall in profits due to a bribery scandal. US authorities announced in December that Keppel's American subsidiary had agreed to pay \$422 million in fines to settle bribery cases. The multi-million dollar kickbacks were paid to Brazilian government officials between 2001 and 2014 in relation to various projects with state-owned oil giant Petrobras and Sete Brasil, a supplier of oil rigs.

The news rocked Singapore's corporate world and battered the squeaky-clean image of a country that is usually ranked among the least corrupt on Earth. Keppel Corp. announced yesterday that the group's net profit plunged 72 percent in 2017 after fines and related costs from the bribery scandal. Net profit came in at Sg\$217 million, down from Sg\$784 million the year before. It would have risen seven percent without the penalties.—AFP

Sports

Irving sparks; Celtics halt four-game losing streak

Raptors down Hawks 108-93

LOS ANGELES: Kyrie Irving scored 20 points as the Boston Celtics snapped their four-game losing streak with a convincing 113-102 win over the Los Angeles Clippers on Wednesday. The Eastern Conference leaders have struggled on offense during their mini-slump, but found their scoring touch to secure a comfortable road victory at the Staples Center. Irving had eight rebounds and seven assists while Jayson Tatum had 18 points on a night when five Celtics players posted double-digit scores. The win saw Boston improve to 35-14 at the top of the East, and ensured they will head into tomorrow's marquee match-up against the NBA champion Golden State Warriors on a winning note.

Boston took control after edging into a 62-55 half-time lead, quickly extending the gap to 13 points early in the third quarter thanks to a burst of scoring from Tatum and Aron Baynes. The Clippers rallied to get within five points but a flurry of scoring capped by a Terry Rozier three-pointer handed Boston a 91-77 buffer heading into the final quarter. The Celtics pressed home their advantage in the fourth quarter to close out the win.

76ers 115 Bulls 101

Ben Simmons posted a triple-double consisting of 19 points, 17 rebounds and 14 assists, leading the Philadelphia 76ers past the visiting Chicago Bulls 115-101 Wednesday night. Simmons registered his fifth career triple-double in just his 43rd NBA game. Only Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (14) and Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James (seven) have more triple-doubles than Simmons this season. Joel Embiid scored 22 points, Dario Saric added 21 points and 10 rebounds and Robert Covington contributed 16 points for the Sixers. Bobby Portis led Chicago with 22 points and 11 rebounds, and Zach LaVine scored 21 points.

Pelicans 101, Hornets 96

Jrue Holiday and Anthony Davis both scored 19 points as New Orleans defeated host Charlotte. DeMarcus Cousins added 16 points and 13 rebounds and E'Twaun Moore had 11 points for the Pelicans, who won for the sixth time in their past seven games. They were playing their lone road game during a six-game stretch. Dwight Howard, appearing in his 1,000th regular-season game in the NBA, posted 22 points and 16 rebounds for Charlotte. Howard also was assessed his 10th technical foul of the season.

Jazz 98, Pistons 95 (OT)

Donovan Mitchell and Rudy Gobert scored 15 points apiece, and Joe Ingles made two pivotal 3-pointers in overtime, lifting visiting Utah past slumping Detroit. Ingles finished with 13 points for the Jazz, who overcame a huge outing by the Pistons' Andre Drummond and a seven-point deficit in the final three minutes of regulation. Ricky Rubio supplied 11 points and 10 rebounds for Utah, and Joe Johnson added 11 points off the bench. Drummond recorded the second 30-20 game of his career with 30 points and 24 rebounds to go along with four

assists and six blocks. Ish Smith contributed 14 points for Detroit, which has lost six straight.

Pacers 116, Suns 101

Thaddeus Young scored 22 points on 10-of-13 shooting as Indiana routed Phoenix in Indianapolis. Victor Oladipo was right behind with 21 points on 6-of-11 shooting and delivered nine assists for the Pacers. Domantas Sabonis scored 19, hitting 8 of 12 shots, and added eight rebounds. Bojan Bogdanovic added 17 for Indiana. Josh Jackson was high for Phoenix with 20 points, hitting 7 of 11 shots. Devin Booker and Troy Daniels each scored 19 for the Suns, who have lost five of the past six games.

Raptors 108, Hawks 93

Fred VanVleet came off the bench to score 19 points, leading Toronto to a rout of host Atlanta in a matchup between one of the best teams in the Eastern Conference and one of the worst. Jonas Valanciunas had 16 points and 13 rebounds for the Raptors, who never trailed. DeMar DeRozan scored 14 points, Serge Ibaka had 12 and OG Anunoby added 10 to lead the way for Toronto. Dennis Schroder had 20 points and eight rebounds, and Kent Bazemore and John Collins each scored 13 points in defeat for the Hawks.

Rockets 104, Mavericks 97

James Harden keyed a sizzling start and, after a sluggish second quarter, Houston caught fire again in the third in a victory at Dallas. Harden finished with 25 points and 13 assists. Trevor Ariza added 23 points for Houston, Eric Gordon had 17 points, and Clint Capela finished with 16 points and 13 rebounds. Wesley Matthews finished with a game-high 29 points and converted 7 of 14 3-point attempts, but the Mavericks lost for the fourth time in five games.

Spurs 108, Grizzlies 85

Pau Gasol had 14 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists as one of eight San Antonio players to score in double figures, and the visiting Spurs topped Memphis. Patty Mills led San Antonio with 15 points off the bench. Danny Green and Bryn Forbes hit for 14 each, Tony Parker scored 12, Dejounte Murray and Davis Bertans added 11 points each and Joffrey Lauvergne tallied 10 for the Spurs. Marc Gasol paced Memphis with 18 points while Deyonta Davis added 12 and Dillon Brooks scored 10 for the Grizzlies.

Celtics 113, Clippers 102

Kyrie Irving amassed 20 points, eight rebounds and seven assists to help Boston snap its four-game skid and avoid back-to-back losses in Los Angeles. Jayson Tatum scored 18 points and both Marcus Morris and Terry Rozier had 15 for the Celtics, who were defeated by the Lakers 108-107 on Tuesday night. Boston avoided its first five-game losing streak since Nov 21-Dec 2, 2014. Blake Griffin led the Clippers with 23 points, and Lou Williams added 20 off the bench as Los Angeles dropped its third straight after a season-best, six-game win-



PHILADELPHIA: Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers dribbles in the first half at Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. —AFP

ning streak. DeAndre Jordan totaled 15 points and 14 rebounds in his return from a five-game absence caused by a left ankle injury.

Trail Blazers 123, Timberwolves 114

Damian Lillard and CJ McCollum combined for 59 points as Portland topped visiting Minnesota. Lillard scored 31 points and McCollum

added 28 for the Trail Blazers, who won their seventh straight home game. Al-Farouq Aminu had 15 points on 6-for-9 shooting—including 3-for-4 from 3-point range—and seven rebounds for the Blazers. Andrew Wiggins scored 24 points and Jamal Crawford added 19 off the bench for the Timberwolves, who had won six of their previous eight games. —Agencies

N Korea calls for unity; hockey players begin Olympics training

SEOUL: A delegation of North Korean officials and ice hockey players crossed the heavily guarded border into South Korea yesterday for joint Olympics training, as Pyongyang called for all Koreans to seek unification of the two nations. The group included 12 North Korean players who will form a combined women's ice hockey team with their southern counterparts at next month's Winter Olympics in the South Korean mountain resort of Pyeongchang. After going through South Korean checkpoints at the border, the team travelled to a national training centre in Jincheon, 90 km south of Seoul.

Stepping off a bus, the athletes ignored questions as they were mobbed by throngs of media. They wore puffy winter jackets in the white, blue, and red colors of North Korea's flag, with "DPR Korea" emblazoned on the back, referring to the country's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The athletes were met in Jincheon with flow-ers from their South Korean counterparts, as

well as head coach Sarah Murray, who previously had called the government's decision to form a joint team a "tough situation."

Under an agreement worked out during the first official talks between the two Koreas in two years, the joint team will wear unity jerseys and march under a unified peninsula flag at the Games' opening ceremony on February 9. South Korea has prepared "all contingency scenarios" in case North Korea makes any provocative moves during the Olympics, but the games remain an opportunity for "peaceful engagement," South Korean foreign minister Kang Kyung-wha told Reuters in an interview on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "We just need to make the best of it."

Early yesterday, North Korea sent a rare announcement addressed to "all Koreans at home and abroad", saying they should make a "breakthrough" for unification without the help of other countries, its state media said. All Koreans should "promote contact, travel, cooperation between North and South Korea" while adding Pyongyang will "smash" all challenges against reunification of the Korean peninsula. North and South Korea remain technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty. Tensions escalated dramatically last year as the regime of Kim Jong Un stepped up its program aimed at developing a nuclear-tipped missile capable of striking the United States. —Reuters

Sports

Pakistan finally overcome Black Caps with T20 win

Pakistan crush New Zealand by 48 runs

AUCKLAND: Pakistan crushed New Zealand by 48 runs in the second T20 in Auckland yesterday to notch their first victory of the tour over the Black Caps. The tourists finally found form with both bat and ball to level the three-match T20 series after a humiliating losing streak that included a 5-0 ODI series white-wash. They set an imposing target of 202 after winning the toss and electing to bat, with half centuries for Babar Azam and Fakhar Zaman.

In response, New Zealand's top order crumbled to 64 for six under a combination of tight bowling and commitment in the field from Pakistan. "Pakistan were excellent tonight in all departments and we weren't that good in any department," New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said. "When you catch them on a great day, you get the result we got."

Openers Fakhar and Ahmed Shehzad laid the platform with a partnership of 94. Pakistan's previous best top-order partnership during the six limited-over matches played on tour so far was just 14. The pair made the most



New Zealand's top order crumble to 64

of Eden Park's short boundaries to comfortably dispatch anything short or wide for four. They punished pacemen Ben Wheeler and Seth Rance, who both conceded 13 runs in an over, prompting New Zealand to introduce spinners Ish Sodhi and Mitchell Santner. Fakhar responded by belting three sixes off Santner's first over, bringing up his maiden T20 half century soon after off 26 balls.

Rance finally broke through in the ninth over, deceiving Ahmed with a slower ball that carried straight to Colin de Grandhomme on the boundary. Fakhar fell in the next over but Sarfraz Ahmed and Babar

kept the scoreboard ticking over, taking Pakistan to 137 for two with five overs remaining. Sarfraz in particular displayed a confidence that had so far eluded him on tour to make 41 off 24 deliveries. Babar brought up his 50 and took the team past 200 with a four off the final ball of the innings. Pakistan's bowling attack capitalized on the good work from their batsmen by dislodging New Zealand's top order cheaply.



AUCKLAND: Pakistan's Hasan Ali celebrates the wicket of New Zealand's Ben Wheeler during the second Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at Eden Park in Auckland yesterday. —AFP

Faheem Ashraf ended with figures of three for 22 while Shadab Khan and Mohammad Amir each took two wickets. Colin Munro was trapped lbw for one then, captain Kane Williamson made a rare golden duck before Tom Bruce was run out thanks to some sharp fielding from Haris Sohail. The home team's

hopes faded when Shadab Khan took the prized scalp of Martin Guptill for 26, leaving the Black Caps teetering at 52 for four and needing more than 11 runs an over. Ben Wheeler and Mitchell Santner combined for a 54-run partnership but the early-innings damage meant the target was beyond them. —AFP

Sri Lanka thrash Bangladesh; reach tri-nation final

DHAKA: Suranga Lakmal led Sri Lankan bowlers on a confidence-boosting rampage to skittle out Bangladesh for 82 yesterday and guide his side into the final of the Dhaka tri-nation tournament. Openers Upul Tharanga (39) and Danushka Gunathilaka (35) sped to the target 83 in just 11.5 overs to seal the win for the islanders. "This is what we're capable of," said Sri Lankan captain Dinesh Chandimal as he celebrated the emphatic 10-wicket win that left Zimbabwe in third place in the series and ensured Sri Lanka another match against Bangladesh in Saturday's final. Sri Lanka had to win to remain in the competition and, coming out of their worst year in international cricket, completed the task in style.

Bangladesh skipper Mashrafe Mortaza won the toss and opted to bat but soon regretted his move. Mushfiqur Rahim made 26 but Sabbir Rahman was the only other batsman to reach double figures, with just 10 runs. Lakmal picked up his three wickets—openers Tamim Iqbal and Anamul Haque, and number five Mahmudullah—for just 21 runs and knocked out the upper order. Thisara Perera, Dushmantha Chameera and Lakshan Sandakan each claimed two wickets. Bangladesh, who had secured emphatic wins in their past three games, were all out for 82 in 24 overs and clearly stunned. Gunathilaka, with three sixes and two fours, and Tharanga romped to victory without the loss of a wicket against Bangladesh's lacklustre bowlers. Chandimal highlighted Sri Lanka's planning for this game. "We wanted to attack them," said the captain. "We can control when we're fielding. Especially Suranga bowled really well at the start. Upul and Danushka finished it really well." Bangladesh skipper Mortaza admitted his side had suffered a wake-up call. "Good thing that our middle order has been exposed," he said.

"Hopefully they'll find out their mistakes." Mortaza said he could not blame the wicket and that Bangladesh should have scored at least 180-200. "Hopefully the boys will deliver in the final," he said. —AFP

Starc, Gayle and new Tendulkar; five to watch

NEW DELHI: Many of the world's top cricketers will be sold to the highest bidder when the Indian Premier League holds its annual auction tomorrow and Sunday. Here are five players who can expect to hit it rich when the eight teams in the Twenty20 tournament place their bids in Bangalore:

Ben Stokes (England)

Rising Pune Supergiant bought the troubled England all-rounder last year for a record \$2.16 million. Stokes now faces a looming court case over a brawl in England, but IPL sides are still keen to sign the star who played a key role as Pune finished runners-up in 2017. The 26-year-old paceman and left-hand batsman is in the top bracket, with a base price of \$312,500. "He is an invaluable asset and a prize pick, there is no debate about that," Delhi Daredevils chief executive Hemant Dua told AFP.

Chris Gayle (West Indies)

A top choice for any T20 team around the world, Chris Gayle is again expected to be at the centre of a bidding war among IPL franchises. The explosive West Indies opener was not retained by Royal Challengers Bangalore for the new season, giving other teams a chance to bag him. The left-hander, who has scored tons in almost every T20 league across the world, leads a West Indies contingent also featuring Dwayne Bravo and Kieron Pollard. The self-proclaimed 'Universe Boss' was brought

in as a replacement for Dirk Nannes in the 2011 edition and has since become one of the most powerful IPL performers.

Mitchell Starc (Australia)

The fastest bowler in Test cricket has already put his searing deliveries to good use in the IPL, even though the pitches normally favour slow bowlers and batsmen. Starc made his presence felt in 2014 and 2015 with Royal Challengers Bangalore, Starc missed 2016 through injury and then decided not to come to India last year. Starc will challenge Steve Smith and David Warner—who were retained by their teams for \$1.9 m each—to become Australia's highest-paid IPL player.

Rashid Khan (Afghanistan)

Afghanistan's rise as a cricketing nation has been synonymous with the success of sensational leg-spinner Rashid Khan. The teenager became an overnight star in his war-ravaged country last year when he was signed by Sunrisers Hyderabad for \$625,000. Khan justified the price by taking 17 wickets in 14 matches at an impressive economy rate of 6.6 per over. Khan, who was named associate nation player of the year by the International Cricket Council, could be headed for another big pay day in a year when Afghanistan are slated to play their first-ever Test—against India in Bangalore in June, just after the IPL finishes.

Prithvi Shaw (India)

Crowded among India's big stars, under-19 national captain Prithvi Shaw could be the bargain pick of the auction. Put in the uncapped player category with a starting price of \$3,125, the prolific batsman from Mumbai is being compared to the legendary Sachin Tendulkar. "Prithvi Shaw has only just turned 18, but already has more cricket experience than many aspiring young players will have in their whole career," said a recent ICC tweet. —AFP

Sports

Ruthless Cilic crushes ailing Edmund to reach Open final

Croatian to meet Federer or Chung in title match

MELBOURNE: A business-like Marin Cilic defused the firepower of Kyle Edmund before crushing the ailing Briton 6-2 7-6(4) 6-2 to become Croatia's first Australian Open finalist yesterday. The sixth seed had won his quarter-final when Rafa Nadal retired hurt in the fifth set, and was again ruthless against a hobbled opponent, ending the 49th-ranked Briton's dream run after just two hours and 18 minutes under the lights at Rod Laver Arena. Sealing the match with a thumping serve, the 2014 US champion will bid for his second grand slam title against the winner of Roger Federer and South Korea's rising star Chung Hyeon. He will enjoy two full days off after his centre court cakewalk which left the largely pro-Edmund crowd cold on a hazy, moist evening.

"I noticed that just in the third game, the third set, when I broke him, he just let a couple of balls go past him," Cilic, racked in sweat, told Jim Courier in the on-court interview. "(He) had an extremely tough run to the semis, had a couple of five-setters and a couple of four-setters as well. Definitely, it left some scars on his body." An agitated Edmund took a medical time-out after losing the first set and slowed noticeably in the third, laboring in vain to keep pace with Cilic's baseline missiles. It was a deflating ending for a match that began with promise when the 23-year-old came out in a blaze of shot-making to grab break points off the Croatian.

The rangy Cilic had all the replies, however, and studiously avoided Edmund's bazooka fore-

hand as much as he could. Given little latitude to work on his favored side, a frustrated Edmund unraveled in the sixth game. He slapped a backhand into the net tape and the rebound sent it wide, allowing Cilic the first service break. There was no tightness in the Cilic's game, and he calmly broke Edmund again, wrapping up the set in 35 minutes with a rocketed forehand to the corner. Edmund had only a single forehand winner to that point and he exited the court for a medical time-out.

He returned still troubled of mind, and shouted "No!" at himself after bashing into the net when serving at 2-1. The Briton lost his temper at 15-0 in the following game, arguing with the umpire heatedly over a line call on Cilic's serve. "Get the referee, I'm not having it," he snapped before being flat-batted by the second match official. The blow-up seemed to help as he served out to love and kept snapping at Cilic's heels all the way to a tiebreak. But from there the big Croatian played with sublime control, ratcheting up the pressure with an overhead smash and landing a pinpoint serve out wide to have three set points in a hurry.

Edmund saved one but moments later Cilic was roaring in celebration, after lacing a backhand winner down the line to move within a set of the final. It looked bad for Edmund, who began hobbling in vain pursuit of Cilic's raids on his backhand. At 1-1, having been tossed around like a rag doll across the court, Edmund was broken again, slicing a weak retrieve into the net.

fought for 12 hours and 16 minutes to reach her third grand slam final and saved match points against American Lauren Davis in a third-round epic.

"I tried to be calm but today I was like a roller-coaster, up and down. But I was not afraid of losing, so maybe that's why I won those match points." She will need to dredge the depths of her energy reserves against Wozniacki if she is to join the grand slam winners' circle after falling at the last hurdle twice in Paris. "If it's going to come, it's going to come," added the 26-year-old. Halep predicted a marathon against former world number one Kerber but when she charged to a 5-0 lead in 14 minutes it looked as though she might have caught the German on an off-day.

But Kerber roused herself to win 12 of the next 13 points and although Halep closed the set, the touch-paper had been lit and the match caught fire. It felt like Halep was turning the screw when she ran a red-faced Kerber into the ground to seize a 3-1 lead in the second set and had a point for 4-1 lead. But Kerber fought back, saving two break points at 3-4 and then fending off a flurry of Halep backhands to hold.

With Kerber in lockdown mode Halep's patience snapped in the next game as she put a backhand into the tramlines to drop serve before 21st seed Kerber held to level the match. At various times in the 69-minute decider, the players were left propping themselves up with their rackets, lungs heaving, as the rallies grew ever more excruciating.—Reuters



MELBOURNE: Croatia's Marin Cilic hits a return against Britain's Kyle Edmund during their men's singles semi-finals match on day 11 of the Australian Open tennis tournament yesterday. — AFP

Cilic quietly pumped his fist as the crowd was subdued and he quietened the terraces further by breaking the Briton again at 4-2. An 11th ace

and a volley put Cilic a point from the finish before he wound up his serve one last time to put Edmund out of his misery. — Reuters

Halep outlasts Kerber in thriller to reach final

MELBOURNE: World number one Simona Halep quelled a tenacious Angelique Kerber fightback and saved two match points to reach her first Australian Open final with a riveting 6-3 4-6 9-7 victory on Rod Laver Arena yesterday. A wildly unpredictable match veered one way, then the other, before the Romanian ended Kerber's resistance on her fourth match point in a spellbinding deciding set that pushed both players to the limit of their endurance. Former champion Kerber, who won only five points in losing the opening five games, was jelly-legged at times but fought off two match points in the 10th game of the third set before seeing two of her own come and go two games later.

In the end Halep's insatiable desire for a maiden grand slam title proved the greater force as an exhausted Kerber struck a backhand over the baseline. Halep will now face Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki in the first Australian Open final between two players still chasing a first major since 1980. On top of that the showdown between the top two seeds will have the number one ranking on the line. "I feel happy. I feel proud that I could stay there and fight till the end," said Halep who has

Chung can end 'Big Four' era

MELBOURNE: It is fair bet that few would have picked South Korean Chung Hyeon to be the player to break the dominance Roger Federer and the other members of the "Big Four" have had at the Australian Open over the last 13 years. The 21-year-old has enjoyed an amazing run over the last two weeks and if he can get past Federer in Friday's semi-final, it would ensure a final without the Swiss, Novak Djokovic, Andy Murray or Rafael Nadal for the first time since 2005. In fact, barring 2014 when Stan Wawrinka won the title, no player apart from the quartet has even been involved in the men's final at Melbourne Park since 2008.

With Marin Cilic and Kyle Edmund lining up in the other semi-final, that particular dominance is already destined to be broken and Chung denying Federer a place in his 30th grand slam final remains a huge "if". Defending his title as second seed, the 19-times grand slam has yet to give up a set as he has moved through the draw on his mission to match Djokovic's professional era record of six Melbourne titles.

Djokovic, albeit a Djokovic returning from six months on the sidelines, was world number 58 Chung's most notable victim on his run to the last four and the manner of his victory caught even Federer's attention. "I'm very excited to play Chung. I thought he played an incredible match against Novak," the 36-year-old said. "I mean, to beat him here is one of the tough things to do in our sport, I believe. I know that Novak maybe wasn't at 110 percent, but he was all right. He was giving it a fight till the very end. To close it out, that was mighty impressive. "I think it's an interesting match for me. I'll definitely have to look into how I need to play against him because he has some great qualities, especially defensively, like Novak has.

"One thing I know is I'm going to be playing aggressive. I don't know how I'm going to do that exactly yet." Although Chung won the Next Gen Finals last year, his meteoric rise to the top table of the tennis world is indicated by the fact that he will be bidding to become the first man in a decade to play his first tour final at a grand slam. His run through the tournament has stunned even him. "I'm really surprised," he said. "I make semis, I beat like Sascha (fourth seed Alexander Zverev), Novak, the other good players. I never playing in second week in grand slam, so I'm really surprised." — Reuters

Sports

How Egyptian squash players dominate the sport globally

6 of the world's top 10 male players are Egyptian

CAIRO: Egyptian squash players are dominating the sport globally, with coaches and their opponents saying their tight-knit community and freer training techniques have given them a competitive edge. Six of the world's top 10 male players are Egyptian, while four Egyptian women are in the women's top 10. The current world No 1 is France's Gregory Gaultier, but the four players after him in the rankings are all Egyptian.

Alan Thatcher, editor and publisher of the website Squash Mad, said not only do they "hit winners", Egyptians had introduced a more dynamic style of squash that is "amazingly entertaining". "The old style of game was about the long attritional rallies, hundreds of shots, up and down the side wall, but now largely thanks to the Egyptians you're seeing a new style of squash: attacking squash," said Thatcher.



Egypt introduces a more dynamic style of squash

This wave of success was boosted with local icon Ahmed Barada's successes at Al-Ahram International Championship—which from 1996 to 2001 was held with the stunning backdrop of the Giza pyramids. He reached the final in 1996, and took the title in 1998. "This was a big shift for us, to believe that we can become champions," said former World No 1 Karim Darwish. Barada retired at 24, but his successes inspired others, including

four-time World Champion Amr Shabana, the first Egyptian to reach No 1 in 2006. Squash players strategize using the court's four walls and get incredible speed from the rubber ball, whose fastest recorded speed-by Squash Mad-is 178 miles per hour.

'Sharp like our driving'

Shabana compared it to driving in Cairo's sometimes chaotic streets. "It's like our driving: Under pressure, our decision-making process is very sharp," said Shabana. Fewer training restrictions allow players to develop their own style, said Shabana, who retired at 36 and is now advising current Egyptian players. "We must teach the juniors the sport's proper basics... but then we give them space for creativity," said Darwish, who took the No 1 title from

Shabana in 2009, now leading Egypt's largest squash academy at Wadi Degla club. Egyptians had previous international success in the sport, which was introduced by the British occupiers in the 1930s, though the seeds of this current era of domination were planted in the 1990s. It came following and as a result of a slump in the game in Egypt in the 1970s, said Shabana. Lacking enough players, juniors competed with men, and men with women, to fill tournaments,

dol the door with the former European champions languishing in 17th place on 15 points.

"The very first thing we need to do is to present ourselves as a unit so that we have order and stability in our game," Hollerbach told reporters. "We will try to do that this week. I am having a lot of talks. I feel the team is a bit insecure." Hollerbach is no stranger to difficult missions, having taken Wuerzburger Kickers, with the lowest budget in the fourth division, up to the second division in consecutive seasons from 2015. He had earlier won the Bundesliga as Felix Magath's assistant at VfL Wolfsburg in 2009 and then followed the same coach to Schalke.

Hard-working and rugged-earning 95 yellow cards in his 222 Bundesliga matches according to league records-Hollerbach desperately needs to plug a leaky defense that has conceded 28 goals in 19 games. "What is now important is to be compact and not make it easy for opponents to score," Hollerbach said, with third-placed RB Leipzig boasting the league's third best strike force with 31 goals. "I think (my arrival) may help some players release the energy we need right now." At the other end of the table, leaders Bayern Munich are cruising towards their record-extending sixth consecutive Bundesliga title, having already carved out a 16-point advantage as they prepare to host Hoffenheim tomorrow. —Reuters

Axe-wielding Hollerbach hoping to cut Hamburg losses

BERLIN: Former Hamburg SV defender Bernd Hollerbach will need to live up to his nickname of "Holleraxe" if he is to whip the Bundesliga club back into shape and help them avoid relegation as they prepare to face RB Leipzig tomorrow. Hollerbach, a trained butcher who was known for his no-nonsense approach during a seven-year playing stint at Hamburg, took over from sacked coach Markus Gisdol this week with a clear mandate of maintaining the club's 100 percent Bundesliga record.

Hamburg are the only side to have played every season in the top division since its creation in 1963 but the former champions have been involved in two relegation playoffs in the last four seasons and narrowly escaped another one in the last campaign. It has not been much different this season after they opened with two straight wins before slipping into an all-too-familiar slump. They managed just two more victories in their next 17 matches before club bosses showed Gis-



CAIRO: Egyptian world No 3 squash player Ali Farag (L), 25, trains during a session in Wadi Degla sports club in Cairo. —AFP

pushing everyone to improve at a younger age, said Shabana, who himself played in men's tournaments when he was just 12.

'Best of the best'

"We have a squash tournament every two weeks," said women's No 5 Nouran Gohar. Even in training, "you're playing against the best of the best outside of tournaments," said Rod Gilmour, co-author of Jahangir Khan:555. Not only do they train together, the community has several married

couples. These include No 3 Ali Farag and No 7 Nour El Tayeb, who won the 2017 US Open titles on the same day. Established players also pass on their knowledge, said Farag. "We had Amr Shabana, Karim Darwish, and Ramy Ashour, who never spared any advice, always training with us, helping us improve," said Farag, adding theirs is a "close-knit community". Women have also achieved dominance, with 2017 World Champion Raneem El Welily reaching No. 1 in 2015, a spot now held by Nour El Sherbini. —AFP

Kuwait Arabian Horse festival kicks off Feb 2

KUWAIT: Kuwait Festival for the Arabian Horse 2018, sponsored by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, will kick off on February 2. The festival, due at Bait Al-Arab (House of Arabs), will include the Seventh International Championship for Arabian Horses Beauty Contest, scheduled on February 2-3, said Abdullah Al-Braihi, the event manager at a news conference held at Bait Al-Arab yesterday.

There will be other activities namely the Third All Nations Cup Straight Egyptians, due on February 16-17, said Al-Braihi who lauded His Highness the Amir for his continuous support for the sport. Efforts by horse breeders from Kuwait, sisterly and friendly states to promote the sport have been helpful for the event success, he said alluding as a fruit of these efforts a decision by the European Conference of Arab Horse Organizations (ECAHO), lifting the festival rating from B to A. Meanwhile, Nasser Bouresli, a member of the festival higher committee, said



289 studs would partake in the Arabian Horse Festival and 172 others in the Egyptian horses' category.

Participation in this year's festival is higher by 20 percent as compared to the first championship and 35 percent in contrast to the second, he said, alluding to greater interest from the GCC countries and easy registration. Bouresli said 17 ECAHO-accredited referees, nine for the Arabian festival and eight for the Egyptian competition, would be present, predicting sensational contests and noting that the awards would exceed one million dollars. Nasser Al-Ghath, member of the committee, said the festival managers, led by Sheikha Sara Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, are keen on facilitating all procedures related to the activity. —KUNA

Business

Real Madrid knocked out by little Leganes

Real suffer humiliating Copa del Rey exit

MADRID: Real Madrid crashed to a humiliating Copa del Rey exit on Wednesday when they were knocked out by little Leganes in the quarter-finals, adding to the atmosphere of crisis at the European champions. Real lost 2-1 in the second leg at their Bernabeu home as the tie finished 2-2 on aggregate with their modest city neighbors going through on away goals despite having lost the first leg 1-0 last week.

Javi Eraso gave Leganes a 32nd minute lead before Karim Benzema leveled after 47 minutes but Brazilian striker Gabriel Pires then hit the winner with a firm header eight minutes later. It was a depressing evening for Zinedine Zidane's side who, despite being in the Champions League last 16 where they face Paris Saint-Germain in three weeks' time, are 19 points behind Barcelona in the Spanish title race.

The fans let their feelings known by booing off the team at half-time. Leganes have a budget of just 45 million euros—six times less than the 675 million euros commanded by mighty Real. Even without Cristiano Ronaldo and Gareth Bale, who were rested Wednesday after starring in the 7-1 rout of Deportivo La Coruna at the weekend, Real's second-string side should still

have had enough firepower for a side languishing in 13th spot in La Liga. But Leganes put on an inspired display, despite backs to the wall late in the game, to make the semi-finals for the first time.

In the night's other game, Valencia made the semi-finals but needed a 3-2 penalty shoot-out to defeat Alaves who won 2-1 for a 3-3 aggregate. On Tuesday, Sergio Escudero's goal after just 24 seconds set Sevilla on their way to a 3-1 win over Atletico Madrid and a place in the semi-finals. Sevilla, finalists in 2016, had won the first leg 2-1. Meanwhile, Brazilian

playmaker Philippe Coutinho has been named in the Barcelona squad for Thursday's Copa del Rey clash against Espanyol, his first call-up since his 160 million euros (\$194 million, £142 million) move from Liverpool.

Coutinho, who has been handed the number 14 shirt vacated by China-bound Javier Mascherano, had been sidelined by a thigh injury since his drawn-out transfer saga came to an end on January 6. The 14 shirt was also worn by the club's Dutch legend Johan Cruyff who died in 2016. Coutinho has been cleared to make his debut at Camp Nou as Barcelona look to



Humiliating Copa del Rey exit adds to Real's misery



MADRID: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (left) dives to head the ball beside Leganes' Spanish defender Unai Bustinza during the Spanish 'Copa del Rey' (King's cup) quarter-final second leg football match between Real Madrid CF and CD Leganes at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium on January 24, 2018. —AFP

overturn a 1-0 defeat to Espanyol in the first leg of their quarter-final clash. Coutinho spent six months with Barcelona's city rivals on loan in 2012. Club captain Andres Iniesta and striker

Paco Alcacer were also included in the 19-man squad for Thursday's game as was Colombian defender Yerry Mina, another transfer window recruit.—AFP

Roles reversed as Lazio fly and Milan struggle

MILAN: At the start of the season, AC Milan were seen as a side capable of challenging for Champions League places and even the Serie A title while Lazio were widely expected to hover around mid-table. Yet when the two sides face each other at the San Siro on Sunday in the first part of a double bill, which also features a Italian Cup game three days later, it will be Lazio in the role of favorites. Lazio go into the match in third place with 46 points and as Serie A's top scorers, having blasted 56 goals in 21 games, including six matches where they have scored four goals or more.

Milan, meanwhile, are stuck in seventh place with 15 points fewer than their Lazio, despite having spent almost 10 times as much as their opponents in the summer transfer market.

"Nobody gave us much thought before the start of the championship," said Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi after Wednesday's 3-0 win over Udinese. "They expected to see us in 10th place but now everyone is talking about us."

"We must not forget where we started from. The lads deserve the praise but we can still get better." Inzaghi, the younger brother of former Italy forward Filippo, was initially appointed on a caretaker basis late in the 2015/16 season.

Lazio then named Marcelo Bielsa as their long-term coach during the summer of 2016 but the eccentric Argentine quit after two days and Inzaghi, who had already agreed to coach lower tier Salernitana, was invited back. Since then, the 41-year-old has emerged as one of the best young coaches in Serie A, taking Lazio to fifth place last season.

According to the specialist website Transfermarkt, Lazio spent just under 29 million euros (\$36.01 million) in the summer transfer window with right back Adam Marusic the most expensive purchase at 6.5 million euros from Oostende. Yet Lazio have a good track record of signings over the last few years with players such as Felipe Anderson, Sergej Milinkovic-Savic and Stefan de Vrij all rocketing in value since joining the club.

Milan, on the other hand, have spent 230 million euros on new players, according to CEO Marco Fassone, yet have been struggling for consistency ever since they lost 4-1 at Lazio in early September.

Coach Vincenzo Montella was fired in November and replaced by fiery former midfielder Gennaro Gattuso who, although he has a strong identity with Milan, had never coached a Serie A team before. Gattuso also suffered a rocky start but Milan have enjoyed a mini-revival recently, beating neighbours Inter Milan in the Coppa Italia and winning their last two league games. "This team has a lot of quality. I see great responsibility from the boys and a sense of belonging," said Gattuso after the 2-1 win at Cagliari on Sunday. "The management could have done something in this transfer market but I asked them not to because I believe in this team. Some of our lads are very young and so many of our players can still do much more".—Reuters

Neymar absent as PSG make French Cup progress 4-2

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain made light of Neymar's absence in beating Guingamp 4-2 to secure their ticket to the French Cup last 16 on Wednesday as Edinson Cavani was made to wait for his club-record goal. Despite PSG's dominance Cavani failed to get on the scoresheet as he pursues a record 157th goal, but it wasn't for the want of trying as he failed to convert a hatful of chances. The Uruguayan striker is on the verge of becoming PSG's all-time scorer after drawing level with Zlatan Ibrahimovic's benchmark in the 8-0 rout of Dijon last week.

Neymar left the pitch after that Ligue 1 outing angered at booing directed at him from Parc des Princes fans when he stepped up to take a penalty rather than allowing Cavani a shot at the record. The world's most expensive player was missing from PSG's 2-1 loss at Lyon on Sunday and again for this Cup tie with according to the club "a pain in his right thigh". A section of the club's fans - 'Collectif Ultras Paris' (CUP) - conveyed a message of support to the Brazilian. "To boo our players runs contrary to our values," "Neymar PSG Cup united for Paris", home supporters wrote on banners in the stands. Tackled about Neymar, PSG coach Unai Emery said: "He's continuing his recovery with the physio, I hope he'll be back with the team very soon.—AFP

Sports

Granit puts rock-solid Arsenal into Cup final

Arsenal set up Man City League Cup final

LONDON: Arsenal fought back from a goal down against old foes Chelsea to reach the League Cup final as Granit Xhaka poked home to complete a 2-1 second-leg win on Wednesday that set up a Wembley showdown with Manchester City. Nothing separated the sides after the semi-final's first leg at Stamford Bridge ended goalless two weeks ago, but the stalemate was swiftly broken as Chelsea took the lead through Eden Hazard after seven minutes at the Emirates Stadium. Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has faced perennial questions about his side's steel in the face of adversity, but these were swept away as they leveled five minutes later through a fortuitous Antonio Rudiger own goal before they turned the match on its head.

Midfielder Xhaka turned predator 15 minutes after halftime to finish from close range and Arsenal stayed rock-solid at the back for the rest of the game to set up an enticing final against Premier League leaders City on Feb 25. Arsenal had been under the cosh for much of the first half but they came out after the break a changed side, taking the game to their visitors. "In the first half we gave Chelsea too much respect and distance. We were a bit scared to go for it," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger, who has never won the League Cup. "We were not playing in the right position but we amended that in the second half and took control of the game."

World Cup on track despite boycott: Qatar

DAVOS: Qatar is confident that it can host a successful World Cup in 2022 and preparations are fully on track after a boycott by its Gulf neighbors briefly disrupted supply lines last year, its foreign minister told Reuters. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, who is also deputy prime minister, said Qatar's economy was now growing much faster than anticipated and the major gas exporter was well prepared to withstand the crisis in relations with its neighbors.

He also said Qatar still counted on strong support from US President Donald Trump to help solve the crisis and had filed legal complaints with Western regulators against what it sees as currency and market manipulations by its neighbors. "We are confident we will host the best World Cup in the Arab world. It will represent the whole Arab region," Sheikh Mohammed said in an interview during the World Economic Forum in Davos.

"The government has already overcome the disruptions which happened to supplies at the beginning of the crisis and we have introduced alternative routes. There is no disruption at the moment," he said, adding he had heard no signals from FIFA that it was planning to change the venue of the World Cup. FIFA has made no sug-

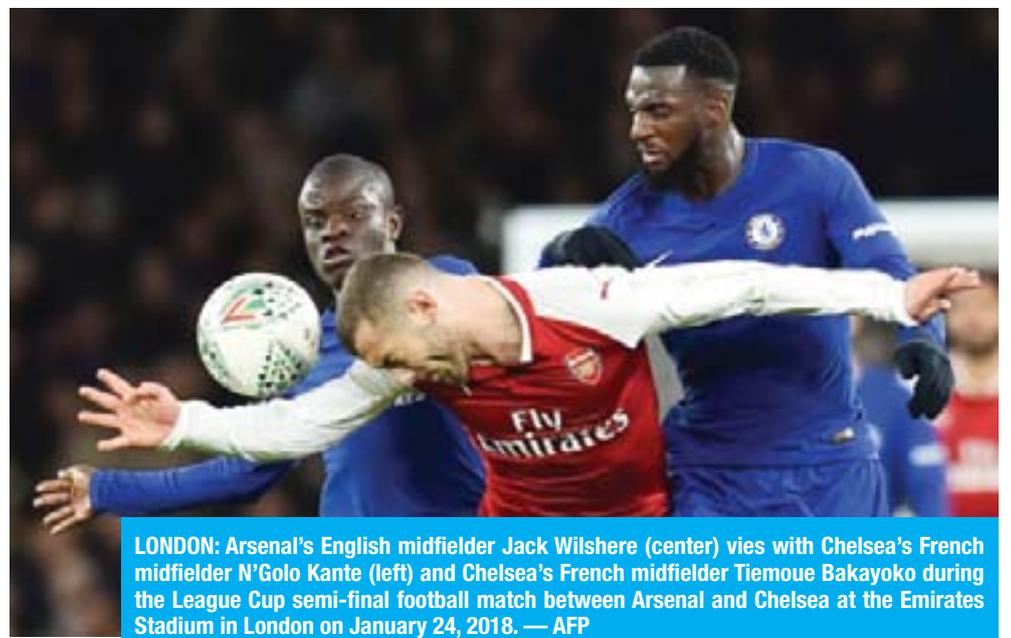
The sides were meeting for the fifth time this season and it was clear that familiarity had bred a certain degree of contempt as the tackles flew in during a fiercely contested opening. Arsenal had lost only one of their previous seven games against Chelsea, but were quickly under pressure as Hazard put the visitors ahead, calmly stroking the ball past David Ospina after Chelsea carved open the hosts' backline. The Emirates was subdued as Chelsea controlled the ball but a fortuitous leveler after 12 minutes brought the home crowd back to life and sparked Arsenal's revival.

A deep corner was met by Nacho Monreal whose header cannoned off the head of Marcos Alonso before ricocheting of Rudiger to leave Chelsea keeper Willy Caballero stranded. Chelsea were hit with an injury blow when Willian was forced off with what looked like a hamstring problem after 29 minutes and his departure handed a debut off the bench to Ross Barkley. That seemed to shift momentum in Arsenal's favor as the hosts finished the first half on the front foot, with Mesut Ozil seeing an effort deflected just wide, before they grabbed the lead shortly after the break.

Lacazette's pull back was deflected off Rudiger into the path of Xhaka, who stuck out a leg and poked the ball past Caballero from close range. From that moment on Chelsea barely created a chance as Arsenal stayed res-

gation that either Russia or Qatar should lose the right to stage tournaments in 2018 or 2022 respectively, despite publishing a report last year detailing numerous attempts to influence voting officials. The diplomatic crisis, in which Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt have boycotted Qatar, erupted last summer when the four countries cut diplomatic, transport and trade ties with Qatar, accusing it of financing terrorism. Riyadh also accuses Qatar of cosying up to the kingdom's arch-rival Iran. Qatar rejects the charges and says it is being punished for straying from its neighbors' backing for authoritarian rulers. The World Cup is the centerpiece of Qatar's strategy to project itself on the global stage. The soccer tournament was dragged into the Gulf crisis last year when the UAE said Qatar's hosting of the World Cup should depend on it rejecting "extremism and terrorism".

Sheikh Mohammed said the crisis was negatively affecting security coordination across the entire Gulf region. "This undermines our collective effort in combating terrorism. Our officers are not allowed to go to the (US) Fifth Fleet, their (Saudi and UAE) officers' seats are vacant in Doha while their flags are there," he said, referring to the US Navy in the Gulf and the US base near Doha. Qatar and Saudi Arabia have both been among the closest allies of the United States but all attempts by Washington to help solve the crisis have so far failed. "When President Trump spoke to the Emir (of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani) last week he stressed this point and he said that he wants to help in solving the crisis". —Reuters



LONDON: Arsenal's English midfielder Jack Wilshere (center) vies with Chelsea's French midfielder N'Golo Kante (left) and Chelsea's French midfielder Tiemoue Bakayoko during the League Cup semi-final football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium in London on January 24, 2018. — AFP

olute at the back and sharp on the counter, with the best opening falling to Alex Iwobi whose effort from 15 meters was saved by the legs of Caballero. It was Chelsea's first defeat since Dec 9, yet they have now failed to win six

out of their last seven games, if you discount their penalty shootout win over Norwich in the FA Cup. "There is a big disappointment ... there was great will to play at Wembley," Chelsea boss Antonio Conte said.—Reuters

Chelsea-target Edin Dzeko saves Roma

MILAN: Chelsea-target Edin Dzeko grabbed a late 1-1 draw for Roma at Sampdoria on Wednesday as Lazio powered past Udinese 3-0 to boost their push for a Champions League spot next season. Roma sporting director Monchi had earlier denied a deal had been reached with Chelsea over the sale of Bosnian striker Dzeko.

And the 31-year-old showed his worth when he nodded in a crucial injury time goal to grab a point after Fabio Quagliarella's penalty had given Sampdoria the lead just before the break. Roma stay fifth after missing the chance to join Inter Milan in fourth, the final Champions League spot next season, in their game pushed back from September 10 due to weather warnings in Genoa. "Dzeko is here and as long as that is the case, I will play him," said coach Eusebio De Francesco. "He proved himself to be a great professional, a decisive player and someone who is good for this team."

Earlier third-placed Lazio overran Udinese in a game rescheduled from November 5 because of rain in the capital to pull three points clear of Inter Milan. Simone Inzaghi's Lazio are eight points behind leaders Napoli after 21 games and seven adrift of champions Juventus in second. "Lazio have surprised many people. We are up there now and they're starting to talk about us a little more," said Inzaghi. "At the start of the season, nobody expected this. 'We're third and we must try to stay there until the end, even if it will be difficult to maintain this pace.'"

Despite the absence of leading scorer Ciro Immobile through injury, Lazio followed on their 5-2 win over SPAL and 5-1 win over Chievo in their last two games. The first goal came after 22 minutes when Brazilian Samir accidentally turned the ball into his own net. Brazilian Felipe Anderson set up Portuguese winger Luis Nani two minutes after the break and then scored the third himself with three minutes to go. Lazio kept their Champions League alive with their fourth win the last five matches, as Udinese's two-month unbeaten streak ended to keep them ninth. "The 3-0 doesn't reflect the game," said Udinese coach Massimo Oddo. "We were always in the game, but their second goal knocked the wind out of our sails. 'I'm sure they'll fight to the end for a place in the Champions League.'— AFP



CAIRO: Egyptian world No 3 squash player Ali Farag, 25, trains during a session in Wadi Degla sports club in Cairo. — AFP

How Egyptians are dominating squash