

Friday Times

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Let Ahmad go...



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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It was heartbreaking to read a report published by Kuwait Times regarding a young man who is being held without charge or a fair trial for two years now. According to the man's family, Ahmad had a discussion on Twitter over a religious issue with a person, and the next day he was arrested by the criminal investigations department. He hasn't returned home for more than two years. All efforts by his family went in vain and reached a dead end.

His family has been living in Kuwait since the 1960s, and clearly, they enjoy living here. Through all these years, they have adapted to life here and some of their family members were even born here. They have a natural right to be treated well and if they have broken any law, they will accept a fair punishment after normal legal procedures in court, but not in such a situation.

I believe there is no doubt that detaining anyone without charges is not only unacceptable, but inhumane, and shouldn't happen in the first place. Surprisingly, Ahmad's family is wondering why no one is able to explain why he's in jail or how long he will be kept there, because he has never faced a court or even the public prosecution or knows what precisely is his crime.

No lawyer or embassy can help him because he is not officially charged...so what is the solution? They can't just pretend he doesn't exist. His family hasn't found a solution to free him or even been given a chance to defend him in court. This is a bizarre situation indeed.

Huda, Ahmad's sister, told Kuwait Times that he is in the deportation prison for more than two years, after he spent some time at the criminal investigations department. Ahmad thinks the person who had an argument with him on Twitter is behind his incarceration. According to her, they visited several former and current members of parliament and contacted the Kuwait Human Rights Society, but without success.

I believe the society can intervene to find out the real reasons for detaining Ahmad, and I am surprised that they haven't done anything yet. Also, there is a human rights committee in the National Assembly that can investigate the issue, and if Ahmad broke the law on social media, then he must be put on trial. This is his right, and to have a lawyer to defend him, and even be sentenced to imprisonment if proven guilty. This will let his family know his crime and how many years he will be jailed and for what reason.

I have to say that I have never come across such an incident in Kuwait because we all know and respect the legal procedures here. If his crime is related to violating the country's law, this doesn't mean turning a blind eye to his case or letting him rot in prison without charges or receiving a fair trial in court under everyone's eyes.

In this article, I wish to make a plea to any authority that can help this family and this person and put him on trial to face the consequences and reveal the truth behind jailing him for all this time. We are not a police state and we are all equal in the eyes of the law.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Shoppers through a local mall during a recent holiday in Kuwait's Fahaheel area in the south. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The nightmare of finding a flat in Kuwait



IN MY VIEW

By Nawara Fattahova

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Everyone will agree that moving into a new house is a tough experience that needs a lot of effort. I'm one of those who consider moving the worse nightmare ever. It's not only the fear of change or a new place, or packing the huge amount of stuff I have, but also the process of finding a suitable house. This experience is even harder for a single woman. Many landlords have various restrictions. Some of them don't rent to Kuwaitis, and many refuse to rent to single people.

It has been a very common practice for many years that "bachelors" don't live in buildings for families. But what is strange is that now landlords are even refusing to rent a flat to single women. Five out of 20 houses I visited refused to rent to a single woman, in different areas including Salwa, Rumaithiya, Qadsiya, Jabriya and others. For a divorcee, it would be even harder to find an apartment.

It's tough to find a suitable flat, and going through this experience for the first time makes it more difficult. Time pressure due to the short notice of the current landlord to leave the house made the search quick and intensive. With only a one-month notice to leave, I had to find a house in two weeks, so visited five to seven buildings daily.

I was constrained in my search due to a certain budget, the locality and minimum space required. Furthermore, I had a special problem with height, as I was looking for a high ceiling above 3 meters, which was very rare in all the houses I visited. I searched for ads of flats for rent online and in the newspapers. Only two out of the almost 35 flats that I visited were posted by the landlord directly. All the rest were posted by real estate agencies. It turned out they get a commission from both parties - the landlord and the tenant - although in fact they only provide a service to the landlord, as the tenants are searching by themselves.

These agents ask for half the rent value in commission. In some buildings that are not dealing with an agent, the haris may ask for a commission too, also around half the rent. One of the agents asked me to pay the rent from the middle of this month although I want to move next month, which is in fact the same as taking a commission of half the rent.

I had to make a decision within two weeks, so I agreed to rent one of the flats that I visited. I stopped looking further for flats and paid a deposit to sign the contract by the end of the month, when paying the rest of the rent. When paying the deposit, I found out I had to buy the air conditioning units myself. Also, only then was I told about the commission.

Moreover, after signing the contract, they told me they will not paint one of the rooms. At this point, it was too late to start searching for a new house, and I was already convinced that this was the most suitable flat for my needs. I was forced to do this job at my own expense, but I was lucky as a friend helped me due to his dealings with a painter in his work.

Although the price of land and properties dropped last year, which also caused a drop in rent values, this isn't seen in all areas. While some apartments - especially big ones - have seen a fall in rent, rates for smaller ones like studios or one-room flats have remained the same or even increased.

The most ridiculously overpriced flat was in Bayan, where the landlord who newly built this tiny flat in the yard of his old house asked for KD 360. The 5x5-m area was turned into an "apartment" of two bedrooms and a living room. The whole flat was in fact the size of my current bedroom. Two other flats were a disaster - so filthy and old, I wondered how could anyone live in them. The agent who accompanied me to one of them claimed that the landlord will paint it and replace the sink and toilet, but the staircase and yard were also tired and dirty.

Finding an ideal flat is impossible if you have a limited budget. There will always be something wrong or missing. Either the rooms are very tiny, or the rent is high, or the building doesn't have an elevator and the flat is on the third floor. No place to park the car is one of the most serious problems, and nowadays even buildings with large flats for families offer only one parking spot.

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* This campaign is limited to participants in Kuwait only. Ministries and their departments, companies and NGOs cannot enter the festival.

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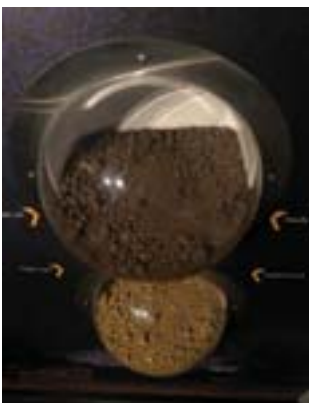


Photo Essay

THE HISTORY OF KUWAIT'S OIL AND GAS

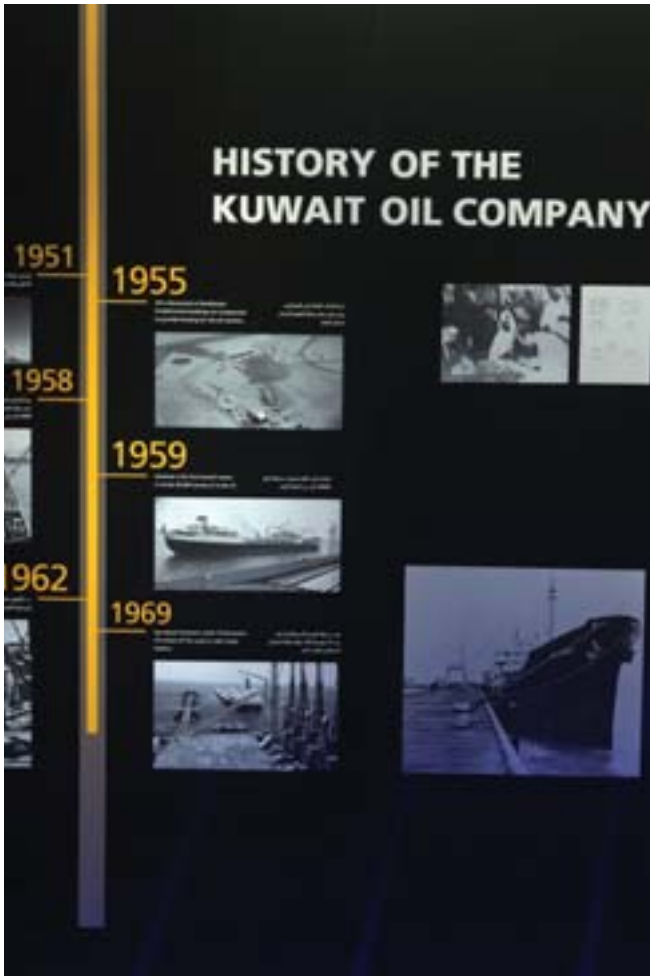
By Athoob Alshuaibi

At the summit of Kuwait's economy sits the power of the lucrative oil and gas industry. Though Kuwait now hopes to diversify its sources of revenue, there is no denying the continued importance of the mighty energy industry.

Kuwait holds the fifth-largest oil reserves in the world, with an estimated 101.5 billion barrels. Petroleum accounts for more than half of GDP, 94% of export revenues, and 90% of government income. Revenue from oil reached KD 13.3 billion in 2017.

To recognize the importance of oil to Kuwait's economy and future, Kuwait Oil Company has dedicated an exhibition to honor its past.

The exhibition was named after the ruler of the country who discovered oil in his reign in 1938 and exported the first oil shipment in 1946, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It includes in its halls, nine areas starting from the ground floor, which contains a large curved screen that displays scenes from the oil industry.



Local

Kuwaiti guides take you to the museum's basement where you will see a four-dimensional hologram show about the origin of oil. In the third area, the guide talks about the search for oil and its exploration. The fourth area in the upper level is a hall designed 360 degrees to see all the features of the Ahmadi area and its oil facilities.

Everything related to the phases of extraction and refining and oil industries is located in the fifth and sixth areas. The seventh and eighth sections were devoted to the story of a fire brigade that succeeded in extinguishing about 700 oil wells after the Iraqi invasion, causing a global and economic environmental catastrophe. Part of the exhibit is dedicated to the commemoration of the international and Kuwaiti teams that extinguished the oil well fires after the liberation of Kuwait.

Finally, it comes as a surprise when you reach the end of the tour, where you can visualize the number of barrels produced by Kuwait per second and per minute compared to the heights of skyscrapers such as Burj Khalifa, the twin towers in Malaysia and others. The exhibition also contains many facilities, services, a coffee shop and a gift store, and it's accessible for the disabled.



Delivering the news to your doorstep for 36 years

By Ben Garcia

The key to success for any organization is its dedicated employees. At Kuwait Times, Zil Shah is the perfect example of this adage. Shah, 63, has been working with Kuwait Times for the past 32 years, delivering newspapers since 1986. Braving all kinds of traffic, weather conditions, work flows and interruptions. Shah comes to your doorstep to deliver the most important news of the day.

Shah believes in leading a simple life. He treats his delivery job with great care and detail. From 11:30 pm, he delivers newspapers to every subscriber on his assigned route. "This job has

been very promising and I am very happy that as you sleep, I am the first person to bring the most important information you need for the day," he said.

When he took up this job, there was no Internet and no cable TV - people mainly depended on the radio and newspapers. "I am proud that I'm a part of Kuwait. For me, it's a privilege," he said.

Shah's task is to deliver around 200 newspapers daily, mainly in the residential areas of Kuwait. "I deliver them daily to every house with a subscription, and baqalas too. Some of them have orders of 15-20 copies," he said. By 4am, his work is done and he heads home.

There was a lull in delivering newspapers during the 1990-1991 Gulf War. After Kuwait's liberation in 1991, he returned from Pakistan and was assigned to Kuwait City - from the Sheraton Roundabout to Safat Square and Sharq police station. This area comprises mainly commercial establishments and offices.

Shah usually grabs a copy for himself and reads it before leaving for his morning routine. "My life revolves around working, eating and sleeping," he said. Shah is married with five children, two of whom are doctors. "With this job, I was able to send all my children to school. I am a proud parent with a stable job in Kuwait and I am very thankful for it," he concluded.



Traditional herbs popular in Kuwait

Photos by Ben Garcia

Traditional herbs are popular in Kuwait and can be found in many local souqs and markets. Some are used for medicinal purposes and others for cooking, for tea or scenting homes. In Souq Al Mubarakia, one can find shops selling dried flowers, herbs and plants including fennel, basil, oregano, garlic, onion and ginger as well as rarer herbal mixtures.

Though there is little scientific evidence demonstrating the efficacy of herbal medicines, many traditionalists believe in the healing powers of herbs and spices.



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Local

Kuwait, China eyeing cooperation on Al-Harir City, islands' projects: Envoy

Embassies continue to celebrate Kuwait's national days

BEIJING: The State of Kuwait and the People's Republic of China are both eager to collaborate on Al-Harir City and the five Kuwaiti Islands' development projects, said Kuwait's Ambassador to China Sameeh Johar Hayat late Wednesday. Hayat's statement came on the sidelines of the Kuwaiti embassy's celebration of the 57th National Day, the 27th Liberation Day, and the 12th Anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's ascension of office. The festivities were held in the capital Beijing.

After meeting with the Assistant Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong on the sidelines of the celebrations, Hayat said that both countries were eager to develop relations on various platforms especially within the energy sector, infrastructural development, and mass communication. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Ambassador delivered a speech during the celebration, welcoming all those who took part in the festivities.

Kuwait, which established diplomatic ties with China in 1971, is amongst the first Arab countries to sign the Chinese 'One Belt One Road' Initiative aimed at the economic prosperity of Eurasia countries, said the Ambassador who affirmed that

this step was reflective of his country's keenness on developing ties with China. Hayat took the chance to thank the Chinese government and people on their stance during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 and the subsequent liberation of Kuwait in 1991. Kuwait and China are eager to pursue more cooperation in the near future in order to achieve the aspiration of both the Kuwaiti and Chinese people, he affirmed. The Kuwaiti Ambassador took the chance to congratulate His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the Kuwaiti people on the advent of the national celebrations, wishing his country further progress and development. A score of Arab and foreign dignitaries attended the celebrations at the Kuwaiti embassy.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti embassies in Bhutan and Mexico celebrated the 57th National Day and the 27th Liberation Day, and the 12th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's ascension of office. The embassies in both countries organized events displaying Kuwait's history and culture. A large crowd of Arab and foreign dignitaries attended the celebrations held by both embassies on the advent of Kuwait's national days. —KUNA



BEIJING: A group photo taken during a reception hosted by the Kuwaiti embassy in China to celebrate the 57th National Day and the 27th Liberation Anniversary of Kuwait. —KUNA

Terrorism has no religion, color, or race: Ambassador

GENEVA: Kuwait yesterday stressed to the UN Human Rights Council that terrorism was not linked to a certain religion, race, ethnicity, or region, affirming that it was the greatest threat to international peace and security. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim in the 37th Session of the interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism. Terrorism is not only a threat to individuals and communities, it is a major obstacle to the protection and promotion of human rights, he said.

Ghunaim added that the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals required a concentrated international effort to tackle the root causes of terrorism and extremism, in order to achieve stability in countries and societies. Ghunaim stressed Kuwait's keenness to combat terrorism in all its forms through its active participation with the international community to eradicate this scourge. He pointed out that the State of Kuwait has already implemented a law 85/2013, which



Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim

abides by Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) program, adding that Kuwait recently hosted the international ministerial meeting for the coalition to fight the so-called Islamic State (IS).

At the same time, Ghunaim welcomed the Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism and the information presented therein. He reiterated Kuwait's firm stand by rejecting all forms of terrorism and extremism regardless of their causes, motives and sources. The 37th session of the UN Human Rights Council is being held from February 26 to March 23 to discuss UN human rights experts' reports on human rights issues. —KUNA

KD 77.843 million paid unlawfully in labor allowances

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is still collecting money that was paid illegally to Kuwaiti employees in the private sector between August 2009 and December 2016 as mentioned in recent State Audit Bureau reports, said Fawzi Al-Majdali, Secretary General of the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP). The amounts were reportedly paid to people who transferred to the public sector yet continued to collect monthly allowances the government pays to private sector employees, Majdali said. According to the reports, KD 77.843 million were paid unlawfully to 6,195 employees in the period mentioned above, but a large number of that amount has already been recollected in the past two years, Majdali explained.

Environmental situation

State Minister for Housing Affairs Jinan Bushehri met with Public Works Minister Hussam Al-Roumi, and Director of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs

and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Faisal Al-Hasawi to coordinate with regards to the environmental situation at Sabah Al-Ahmad City. Director of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation Ahmad Al-Hussan and Environment Public Authority Director Sheikh Abdullah Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

Bushehri said after the meeting that an agreement was reached by which PAAAFR would close down wells located in the city and revive the tree belt around it very soon. She said PAAAFR will transport water by tankers from the end of the treated water channel to the tree belt to reduce the water level inside the channel, Bushehri said. Meanwhile, the health ministry was contacted to fight pests which spread around the city from ponds that formed due to a flooding in the area's rainwater drainage system.

Separately, the Ozone department at the Environment Public Authority met with officials from the Commerce and Industry Ministry to discuss issues related to cooling and air conditioning gases. A decision was made during the meeting to prevent any hikes in the prices of gas before the summer. Meanwhile, three persons were caught hunting inside Jahra protectorate in coordination with the Interior Ministry. The three face punishments of paying KD 50,000 fines each and possibly jail time.

Kuwait celebrates 16th Firemen's Day

Firefighters who risk their lives to save others: Minister



KUWAIT: Officials attend the opening ceremony of the 16th Firemen's Day festival yesterday. —Photos by Joseph Shagra



Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh (center) is taken on a tour around an exhibition held as part of the event.

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) is holding the 16th Firemen's Day festival from March 1 - 3, 2018 at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center on the Arabian Gulf Road. Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh praised the great role that firefighters play in Kuwait. "We are proud of the work of firefighters who risk their lives to save others' lives and property," he stated during the opening ceremony of the festival held yesterday. "This festival focuses on highlighting the work of firefighters and other military and civil authorities which also deal with cases of fires and accidents to save lives. This event allows the public to know more about the firefighter's job in dealing with fires, rescue, and help operations."

KFSD Director Lieutenant General Khaled Al-Mikrad said meanwhile that the purpose of celebrating this day is to express gratitude and appreciation for the hard work of all firefighters around the world. "I invite the public to come and enjoy the entertaining and awareness activities of this festival," he pointed out.

Undersecretary of Kuwait National Guard Lieu-

tenant General Hashim Al-Rifai also attended the opening ceremony, and noted that the National Guard is participating in this festival based on the Amiri Decree which issued in 1967, and by which the authority was formed to support other public authorities and execute their demanded duties. "After 50 years, the firefighting unit at the National Guard had developed and it serves to complete the demands of KFSD, as we support them during crises and disasters. Furthermore we cooperate in trainings and communications to facilitate the work of both departments," he explained.

Deputy Director General for Development Sector and Human Resources at KFSD Major General Khaled Al-Terket stressed that the 16th Firemen's Day coincides with the World Civil Defense Day, which is celebrated by members of the International Civil Defense Organization (ICDO), which Kuwait joined in May 2015. Its slogan for this year is 'Civil Defense and National Institutions against Disasters'. KFSD will present this slogan with the 'Shamel 4' training that will be held next week, he noted.

"There are 41 fire stations all over Kuwait, in which 3490 firefighters are working, out of the total number of 4,800 who operate 444 rescue and firefighting machines and tools in addition to 41 boats,"



A KFSD boat display during the event.

he said. "Firefighters dealt with 14,087 reports in 2017 according to the annual statistics, which includes 4,882 fire incidents, 4,880 rescues, 1,901 public service cases, and 3,216 different operations. Also, the Prevention Department at KFSD issued

26,527 prevention licenses for various purposes. In addition, inspection units issued 8,838 cautions, 670 fines, and conducted 25 administrative shutdowns of institutions which committed serious violations that cause danger on lives," concluded Terket.

Coastguards foil drug smuggling attempt

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Three persons were arrested while trying to smuggle drugs into the country by sea. Coastguard patrols stopped a boat that entered Kuwait's territorial waters illegally from the south, and when they inspected it, they found 128 pieces of drugs there. The three Iranian nationals were sent to the proper authorities to face drug smuggling and trafficking charges among others.

Search for reckless driver

The traffic department, in cooperation with Ahmadi detectives, located a red car whose driver committed reckless acts and endangered his life and those of others, then collided with a police patrol before escaping, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. The car's owner reportedly painted his vehicle white in a bid to mislead detectives, but they were still able to identify it from marks on its body caused by the accident. No arrest was made as the owner of the house where the vehicle was located said that its owner had left it there and escaped. Investigations are ongoing to put the suspect under arrest.

Officers fight

A special task forces officer physically assaulted a traffic policeman for issuing him a traffic ticket. The attacker was sent to Sharq police station and detained pending further investigations in the case. Separately, a policeman was held for questioning as he is accused of helping a person wash police vehicles using a water hose; a practice that is banned in Kuwait for environmental reasons. Authorities launched an investigation into the case after video footage allegedly showing a policeman assisting the man in washing the cars went viral on social media.

Environmental crime

A person sentenced to jail after committing a serious environmental crime was arrested at

Kuwait International Airport where he tried to escape out of the country. Airport officers notified relevant authorities after the identity verification system showed that the man is banned from traveling and must be arrested to serve a jail sentence. The suspect was reportedly found guilty of discharging hazardous material into a desert area; a crime punishable by jail and a fine of up to KD 10,000 according to the environmental law.

Smuggling foiled

A man was arrested at Kuwait International Airport shortly after his arrival from abroad after two kilograms of marijuana were found in his luggage. Customs officers made the discovery, based on which the passenger was arrested and taken to concerned authorities.



Top Trump's aide
Hope Hicks quits

Venezuela's woes spread to zoos as animals feed on each other

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MONTLOUIS-SUR-LOIRE: An aerial view shows snow-covered roofs in Husseau near Montlouis-sur-Loire yesterday. Fresh heavy snowfalls and icy blizzards lashed Europe yesterday as the region shivers in a deadly deep-freeze that has gripped countries from the far north to the Mediterranean south. —AFP

Deadly blizzards, snowfall hit Europe

Death toll mounts to 21, poor hardest hit

PARIS: Heavy snowfall and deadly blizzards lashed Europe yesterday, forcing Geneva's busy airport to close, as the region shivered in a deep freeze that has gripped countries from the far north to Mediterranean beaches in the south. The snowstorms, unusual for much of Europe at this time of year, left roads blocked, thousands of drivers stranded and schools shut, with weather agencies predicting the biting cold would continue in parts of the region at least through yesterday evening.

The death toll continued to mount, as another three people perished in Poland, taking the number of victims there to 21, most of them rough sleepers. There have also been six deaths in the Czech Republic in recent days, five in Lithuania, four each in France and Slovakia, three in Spain, two each in Italy, Serbia, Romania and Slovenia, and one each in Britain and the Netherlands.

One of the Spanish victims was a 39-year-old homeless man who had been sleeping in an abandoned truck. "Those most at risk of cold-related illness include elderly people, children, and people who have chronic diseases or physical or mental limitations," the World Health Organization said in a statement, adding that the poor, the homeless and migrants were often hardest hit. The Siberian cold front—dubbed the "Beast from the East" in Britain, "Siberian bear" by

the Dutch and the "snow cannon" by Swedes—yesterday forced Geneva airport to announce it was shut until further notice.

Switzerland has in recent days seen temperatures plunge to nearly minus 40 degrees Celsius (minus 38 Fahrenheit) at higher altitudes. In Britain, Storm Emma, rolling in from the Atlantic, looked poised to meet the Siberian chill, causing further snowfall and bitterly cold temperatures. A red alert was extended yesterday for southwestern England, southern Wales and Scotland—meaning extreme weather, a risk to life, widespread damage and transport disruptions—with wind and snow expected through the night.



'Cemetery of trucks and cars'

In Edinburgh, all schools were closed, as police advised people not to travel "unless you're an emergency worker". Glasgow airport remained shut, as Gatwick in London expected "a large number of cancellations and delays to flights today". "This is a very difficult situation but everything possible is being done," Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon said on Twitter.

The mercury also dropped below freezing across southern Europe. Snowfall in northern Italy forced the cancellation of 50 percent of regional trains, while in the city of Naples, schools were shut. In normally-balmy southern France, beaches in Nice were blanketed in a thick layer of snow. Near the city of Montpellier, around 2,000 drivers were stranded on a motorway, causing anger from those sitting behind the wheel for hours on end. "The motorway looks like a cemetery of trucks and cars," tweeted Anthony Jammot, describing an "apocalyptic" 24 hours in his car with two young children and no information or help from local authorities.

Red warnings in Scotland, Ireland and England

In Paris, which awoke yesterday under a blanket of snow, authorities continued operating emergency shelters for the city's roughly 3,000 homeless. Demanding more efforts to keep people off the streets, around 30 local officials spent the night near the city's Gare d'Austerlitz train station as temperatures dipped below zero. "We can't keep considering the homeless just another part of the scenery," Greens lawmaker Ali Id

Elouali said. In Germany, the national homeless association urged shelters to open during the day and not just at night. "You can die of cold during the day too," its chief Werena Rosenke warned. Authorities are also urging people to look out for elderly relatives and neighbors after a French woman in her nineties was found frozen to death outside her retirement home.

No spring amulets

Europe's cold snap comes as the Arctic experiences record-high temperatures, prompting scientists to ask if global warming may be playing a role in turning things upside down. The unusually cold weather has also impacted local customs, as the first spring month began. In Romania, people were marking the day without the amulets they traditionally exchange. In the capital Bucharest, where it has been snowing since Monday and where temperatures have been hovering around minus 10 degrees Celsius, sales of the "martisor" good luck charms have plummeted along with the temperature. Florists have also suffered, as the amulet is often given with a bunch of flowers. "The 1st of March is the most important day of the year for us, where we sell the most flowers," florists' association president Adrian Dinca said. —AFP

Turkish court jails the MP niece of PKK chief Ocalan

Turkey TV blacklists songs, sparking censorship row

ISTANBUL: A Turkish court yesterday handed the MP niece of the jailed leader of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdullah Ocalan, a two-and-a-half-year jail term on charges of terror propaganda. Dilek Ocalan has served in parliament since June 2015 elections as an MP for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). But the party, the second largest opposition faction in parliament, has been battered since the failed 2016 coup bid by arrests of its MPs and officials, including its former top leadership. Dilek Ocalan was handed the sentence by a court in the southeastern region of Sanliurfa, which she represents in parliament, on charges of making propaganda for the PKK, the Dogan news agency said.

The charges relate to her February 2016 participation in a funeral for a PKK militant killed in a clash with the Turkish security forces, the state-run Anadolu news agency said. Dilek Ocalan's lawyer was present in court for the verdict but the MP is not currently under arrest. The party said it could not give further details on her status. Her uncle Abdullah Ocalan founded the PKK and spearheaded the group in its insurgency against the Turkish state which began in 1984 and has left tens of thousands dead. He was detained in 1999 in a Hollywood-style operation by Turkish security forces in Kenya after many

years on the run and sentenced to death.

But he escaped the gallows when Turkey abolished capital punishment in 2004 as part of its bid to join the European Union and his term commuted to life imprisonment. Ocalan is currently serving out the remaining years of his life on the heavily fortified island of Imrali in the Sea of Marmara off Istanbul. Since the resurgence of PKK violence in 2015, he has been deprived of visits and largely cut off from the outside world. Ocalan's brother Mehmet last visited him in September 2016, the first family visit allowed since October 2014. Former party leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdog are among nine HDP MPs currently in jail on charges of links to the PKK, which they deny.

Censorship row

Meanwhile, Turkey's state broadcaster yesterday faced accusations of imposing censorship reminiscent of a military coup after admitting it had banned over 200 songs from being played on air. State broadcaster TRT said that 208 songs had been blacklisted in a 2016 move for promoting the consumption of tobacco or alcohol, setting a bad example to children or promoting "terror propaganda". TRT published the information on its Twitter account in response to a question by main oppo-

sition Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Atilla Sertel.

The list of tracks blacklisted by TRT includes Turkish and Kurdish songs and some of Turkish pop music's famous artists like Demet Akalin, Sila and Bengu. Deputy Prime Minister Bekir Bozdogan rejected accusations of censorship, saying it was normal practice and lashing out at those who he said had misrepresented the channel's actions. "It is very immoral to present something to the public that TRT does ever year-fulfilling its legal duties-as if it were an illegal form of censorship," said Bozdogan, who is also government spokesman. The channel said on Wednesday that it was forced to adhere to rules applicable to all broadcasters and insisted "there is no question of TRT banning a singer."

But Sertel said the move was reminiscent of the mood after the 1980 military coup, when songs deemed inappropriate by the ruling junta were pulled from the air. "TRT prepared a special program in 2013 for songs that 'could not be broadcast' in the coup period. Well, what is it going to do for today's banned singers?" Sertel said. Critics have regularly accused the Islamic-rooted ruling party under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of cracking down on artistic expression and imposing an increasingly conservative morality. —Agencies



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Civilians stay put despite pause in Syria bloodshed

Syrians shun Russia's offer to quit besieged enclave

WAFIDEEN CHECKPOINT: Civilians in Syria's Eastern Ghouta have continued to shun Russia's offer to quit the besieged enclave, as rebels and Moscow blamed each other for the humanitarian deadlock. The air strikes and clashes that killed 600 civilians in 10 days have reduced since the Kremlin announced five-hour halts in the bombardment. But not one of the battered region's 400,000 residents had left to board buses provided by the regime by late Wednesday.

AFP reporters saw no movement at the Wafideen checkpoint through which would-be evacuees were told to exit the Eastern Ghouta enclave that the government lost in 2012 and has besieged almost ever since. "The humanitarian corridor is open to all those who wish to return to the fold of the homeland, but so far nobody came and this is the second day," said a military officer at the checkpoint. Regime-backer Russia on Monday ordered a daily "humanitarian pause" of the enclave and said it was guaranteeing civilians safe passage to flee.

The move fell far short of a full ceasefire voted for by the United Nations Security Council-but was still welcomed inside the enclave as some respite from one of the bloodiest assaults in Syria's seven-year-old war. Despite the step, the UN insisted that all sides must implement the 30-day truce demanded on Saturday, and said some 40 trucks loaded with aid were waiting for the violence to stop. Moscow's "humanitarian

pause" echoes a similar tactic employed by Russia and the Syrian regime as they looked to force rebels out of second city Aleppo during a ferocious 2016 battle.

No casualties at all were reported when Wednesday's window closed at 2:00 pm (1200 GMT) but warplanes were back in the sky moments later. "During the truce, the ceasefire is al-



Air strikes and clashes kill 600 civilians in 10 days

most enforced," said Syrian Observatory for Human Rights head Rami Abdel Rahman, adding that nine civilians were killed in strikes before and after on Wednesday. The first five-hour "pause" on Tuesday passed with two killed in regime bombardment, according to the Britain-based war monitor.

Three days only?

The Syrian regime has accused the Islamist and jihadist groups inside Ghouta of sabotaging the initiative by shelling the designated human-



DOUMA: Syrian civilians are seen amid the rubble of buildings which were destroyed earlier in regime air strikes, in the rebel-held besieged town of Douma in the eastern Ghouta region. —AFP

they wanted more international guarantees. In a letter sent to the United Nations on Tuesday, they said they were willing to expel the jihadist factions that also have a footprint in Eastern Ghouta.

But they demanded any evacuations be conducted under the supervision of a UN mechanism. Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose

the besieged areas. US representative Kelley Currie accused the regime of violating the ceasefire, while Russian ambassador Vassily Nebenzia blamed the rebels. Jeffrey Feltman, UN under secretary-general for political affairs, expressed frustration over the council's inaction and called for the resolution to be implemented, lamenting "that is not happening". —AFP

'Defaming' army is treason, Egypt president warns

EL ALAMEIN: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi told media yesterday they should prevent defamation of the military, which he warned would be seen as "high treason" amid a campaign to crush Sinai jihadists. Sisi's comments at a ceremony to inaugurate the "New El Alamein" city in western Egypt come after complaints by authorities against foreign and local media coverage of the campaign in Sinai.

But Sisi also acknowledged that authorities should allow more media access to front lines to "see how (soldiers and policemen) are dying." "It is not appropriate that they be defamed and we will not allow it," he said in a speech broadcast on live television. "I hope the media helps us confront that without me repeating this demand," he said. "This defamation will be met with the law. It constitutes, for me, high treason," he added.

Access for journalists has been restricted in the Sinai Peninsula, where the military and police launched a wide-ranging campaign to defeat Islamic State jihadists on February 9. The military says it has killed scores of jihadists in the offensive, and at least seven soldiers have been killed. It was not immediately clear to whom Sisi was referring, but his comments come after human rights group Amnesty International said the military has used banned cluster bombs in the campaign. —AFP

Top Trump's aide Hope Hicks quits

WASHINGTON: Hope Hicks, one of Donald Trump's longest-serving aides and perhaps his most trusted confidante, on Wednesday announced her resignation in the latest of a string of departures from the embattled White House. The 29-year-old former model and PR operative took her first job in politics as spokesperson for the Republican's victorious campaign, before joining him in the White House where she was named communications director last September. While she cut a discreet figure in the White House-refusing all interviews-the former advisor to Ivanka Trump was known around the West Wing for her close relationship with the president's family and as a keen defender of his image.

She was well known to have the ear of the president, who never publicly voiced even the slightest criticism of her. "There are no words to adequately express my gratitude to President Trump," the 29-year-old Hicks said in a statement on her departure. Trump paid tribute to Hicks' "outstanding" contribution over the past three years, calling her "as smart and thoughtful as they come, a truly great person." "I will miss having her by my side but when she approached me about pursuing other opportunities, I totally understood," he added. "I am sure we will work together again in the future."

White House Chief of Staff John Kelly said Hicks had "served her country with great distinction." "To say that she will be missed, is an understatement," Kelly said. Hicks' announcement came a day after she testified before a Congressional intelligence committee about the Russia election meddling investigation. She reportedly told lawmakers she

had told "white lies" for Trump in the course of her duties, but never over the Russia probe.

The White House said Hicks had informed Trump she wished to leave in order to explore other opportunities. Trump's spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said no timeline had been set for her departure, adding that her exit was not linked to her testimony to Congress. In a sign of the high turnover in Trump's administration, Hicks was the fourth person to head the communications team-her immediate predecessor, the brash Anthony Scaramucci, having lasted just 10 headspinning days in the role.

Thrust into spotlight

Hicks' departure follows that of a succession of senior administration figures: from national security advisor Michael Flynn, to Reince Priebus as chief of staff, Sean Spicer as press secretary and Steve Bannon as the president's chief strategist. As communications director she was responsible for shaping the administration's message, but Hicks was far less visible to the public than the press secretary Sanders, and before her Sean Spicer. But she was brutally thrust into the spotlight in early February when another top Trump aide with whom she had become romantically involved was accused of domestic abuse by an ex-wife. Former White House staff secretary Rob Porter-who denies the claims-resigned following the allegations.

Hicks had helped craft the official response to the scandal, despite her personal involvement with Porter. Sanders denied any link between Hicks' decision to leave, and her questioning Tuesday by a congressional panel probing Russian meddling in the 2016 presidential election. During her appearance before the House Intelligence Committee, Trump's communications director had stuck to answering pre-approved questions, and refused to answer many of the other questions put to her. —AFP

International

Robot helping ill kids to beat loneliness and keep learning

LONDON: For children battling long-term illness, coping with physical pain is not their only challenge: being away from school also means missing out on time with friends, and that can be tough. And parents often worry about the impact months of missed classes will have on their child's education.

That is where a classroom robot called AV1 comes in. Its job is to act as the eyes, ears and voice for children with long-term illnesses who cannot make it to class. It allows Elliot Smith to stay in touch with his friends and to keep up with his lessons. He controls it from home using a tablet computer, and can listen or talk. If he wants to ask a question, he lights up the robot's head to alert the teacher. "I was sort of worried about what the other students would think of the robot. They were definitely surprised by it," the 12-year-old, who is using the AV1 while recovering from brain cancer, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Schools can rent a robot or buy one for 2,200 pounds (\$3,065). Smith's AV1 - which his classmates christened 'Bob' - was paid for through a mix of fundraising and philanthropy. The robot looks like a garden gnome that has gone through tech giant Apple's minimalist design process. They are made by a Norwegian social enterprise called No Isolation, which was founded to reduce involuntary isolation. Across Europe, 370 young people between the ages of eight and 20 use an AV1. Most live in Scandinavian countries.

The organization's founder, 27-year-old Karen Dolva, who studied computer science at university, started No Isolation after a friend working as a nurse in a children's unit described it as "quite miserable". After researching the issue, Dolva met Anne Fi Troye, whose teenage daughter had died from cancer. Troye told

Dolva about the experience, and of the devastating effect of isolation for children recovering at home. "They're locked away, forgotten. And when they get well they're just pushed out into the world and everyone assumes they're going to be happy now that they're well again," Dolva told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Growing apart

Research by the British cancer charity CLIC Sargent found nearly half of parents of primary school children with cancer said their child's diagnosis and treatment had caused the youngsters to grow apart from their friends. After speaking to charities and healthcare professionals in Britain, Dolva's organization concluded that 70,000 British children spend large parts of the school year at home or in hospital due to illness.

Dolva's goal with No Isolation was to make technology useful. She used to run a consultancy incubating tech companies, but felt they were too focused on "making efficient people faster, which is so sad". "We would never have started No Isolation unless we could help someone. That was the one thing we were absolutely sure about when we started," she said. More than one in ten people in Britain feel isolated, and research links loneliness to dementia, early mortality and high blood pressure.

Enter the robot

Months of chemotherapy left Elliot Smith, from Yeovil in southwest England, too weak to attend school. His weight nearly halved, and he could barely eat. His father said the robot had made a big difference as his son was able to see and listen to his teacher, and interact when he felt strong enough, re-



No isolation's AV1 robot in a classroom in Norway. —Reuters

ducing his anxiety about falling behind at school. "This device is absolutely pivotal in making those first next steps into integrating back into mainstream education," Bill Smith said.

Another worry was that he was losing touch with his friends, while also feeling self-conscious about his appearance. "His hair is only just starting to grow back. Whenever we would go anywhere with Elliot before,

he wouldn't take his hat off. He's very conscious of his appearance, so this has helped in that he doesn't physically have to be there," Smith said. The 12-year-old said he was unsure how much Bob was helping him to learn, not least because the amount he can hear varies depending on level of classroom noise and the robot's proximity to a wifi router. So what did he think was the main benefit? "Seeing my friends again." —Reuters

Australia amnesty takes 57,000 guns off the streets

SYDNEY: More than 57,000 illegal firearms, many of them automatic or semi-automatic weapons, have been handed in under an Australian amnesty that authorities yesterday said had made the country safer. A final count from the three-month campaign to remove weapons from the streets came with debate over gun reform rampant in the United States after a mass school shooting in Florida. Australia's strict gun laws, enacted after a 1996 mass shooting that killed 35 people, are often held up by safety activists as a model for the US to follow. The country has had no mass shootings since.

The first national amnesty since Martin Bryant went on the rampage armed with semi-automatic weapons at the historic Tasmanian colonial convict site of Port Arthur 22 years ago netted 57,324 firearms. Running from July 1 to September 30 last year, almost 2,500 of them were fully-automatic and semi-automatic. Law Enforcement Minister Angus Taylor said it

was a great example of what could be achieved "when governments and the Australian public work together to make our communities safer".

"Taking these unregistered firearms off the streets means they will not fall into the hands of criminals, who might use them to endanger the lives of innocent Australians," he said.

"The government is committed to removing illegal firearms from our community and tackling gun-related crime. "The next step of our ambitious agenda is passing our legislation that cracks down on gun trafficking." Among more unusual items handed in was a sten machine gun, best known for their use by British forces during World War II, and a small French Garter gun.

A rocket launcher, which the owner said was found at a local tip, was also handed over. Ahead of the amnesty, which was prompted by fears of terrorism and an influx of illegal guns that saw a spate of gangland shootings, the government said it believed there were as many as 260,000 illicit weapons on the streets. People were allowed to hand in unregistered or unwanted firearms with no questions asked. Outside this, they face fines of up to Aus\$280,000 (US\$212,000) or 14 years in jail for illegal gun possession. All guns in Australia must be registered, although many arrive illegally from overseas through organized syndicates. —AFP

Four UN troops killed in central Mali mine blast

BAMAKO: Four UN peacekeepers were killed on Wednesday when a mine exploded under their vehicle in central Mali in a deliberate attack, capping a bloody week for civilians and security forces in the West African nation. Jihadists have ramped up their activities in central Mali in recent months, targeting domestic and foreign forces in violence once confined to the restive north.

The UN said in a statement that the "explosion of a mine or IED against a MINUSMA vehicle on the Boni-Douentza road" in the Mopti region killed the four peacekeepers and wounded four more. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "strongly condemned" the attack, his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said. "These cowardly acts will not deter MINUSMA's determination to support the Malian authorities in their efforts to protect civilians and accompany the Malian people in their quest for peace and stability," Dujarric added.

The mission, known by the acronym MINUSMA, counts almost 11,000 peacekeepers and has been deployed in Mali since 2013 to counter a jihadist insurgency and general lawlessness. "MINUSMA is currently upgrading its security presence in central Mali," Mission chief Mahamat Saleh

Annadif said. "Cornered, the terrorists are multiplying their attacks." Six Malian soldiers were killed on Tuesday when their vehicle struck a mine, the army said on Wednesday, and a forest ranger was gunned down in a third incident blamed on jihadists.

Security forces' abuses

Mali's military is frequently accused of abuses, with families on Wednesday pointing the finger at the army in the killing of seven civilians during an operation in the same area a week ago. A UN report published this month found that "at least 20 percent" of recorded incidents in 2016 and in the first of half of 2017 that endangered civilian lives involved the Malian authorities—essentially the security forces. Nuhoun Sarr, the nephew of one of seven men killed on February 21 after their arrest by the military, said the authorities informed him on Wednesday morning of his uncle's fate. "They called us to tell us our relatives were killed during the operation, without elaborating," he told AFP. Yehia Ag Mohamed Ali, a former minister and member of the opposition Sadi party, told AFP: "According to our information, the seven civilians arrested on February 21 by the Malian army in Sokolo were killed by soldiers."

The government said in a statement on Wednesday that the army was "carrying out reconnaissance missions and searches in the Sokolo area, during which civilians unfortunately lost their lives". "An enquiry has been opened," it added. Islamic extremists linked to Al-Qaeda took control of the desert north of Mali in early 2012, but were largely driven out in a French-led military operation launched in January 2013. —AFP

International

Empty seats, missing friends as school reopens after shooting

Students make emotional return to Florida school

PARKLAND: Survivors of the second-deadliest US public school shooting were brought to tears on Wednesday by empty seats and missing friends at roll call as they returned to their Florida high school two weeks after 17 students and educators were massacred there. Upon emerging from a half-day of classes intended to ease their return after the tragedy, some of the roughly 3,000 teens who attend Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, described their emotional day.

Samuel Safaite, a 15-year-old sophomore, said students in his Spanish class broke down when the teacher took attendance and read out the name of Luke Hoyer, a 15-year-old slain in the attack. "A lot of people started crying because we all knew he was gone," Safaite said. "It was difficult for a lot of people."

Many of the students carried white flowers when they arrived at the school in the morning and wove through hundreds of uniformed police officers providing security for their return. Emotional-support dogs also were on hand to provide comfort. Nikolas Cruz, 19, who had been kicked out of the school for disciplinary reasons, is accused of carrying out the rampage. The shooting inflamed the nation's long-running debate on gun

rights as defined in the Second Amendment of the US Constitution. It also sparked a youth-led gun control movement featuring survivors of the attack, who have already lobbied lawmakers in Florida's capital Tallahassee and Washington, DC.

"We will push for change and our children are going to be the change agents," said Jeannine Gittens, 44, who drove to the school to be there to meet her son Jevon, a 16-year-old junior, when

he arrived on the bus. "We see that things have to change and we are not going to stop until they do." The building where most of the victims died was closed, surrounded by a chain-link fence decorated with signs reading "MSD strong" and "Pray for Douglas." Florida lawmakers are contemplating

tearing it down and replacing it with a memorial to the victims.

Hard to move on

As she left the school with her mother and 18-year-old brother, sophomore Marisa Lopez, 16, said some friends were talking about leaving the school. "I don't think that some people are ready to move on," Lopez said, adding that some of her friends had witnessed the shooting of Scott Beigel, a 35-year-old social science teacher who was one



Deadly shooting inflames debate on gun rights



PARKLAND: Students leave Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School after attending their classes for the first time since the shooting that killed 17 people on February 14. —AFP

of the three adults killed in the attack. "I just don't know if some of them are ever going to get over it." Investigators say Cruz used a legally purchased AR-15 assault-style rifle in the attack. President Donald Trump met with a group of 17 Republican and Democratic lawmakers with a broad range of views on guns on Wednesday, and asked for a

broad bill to address school shootings. The Republican president, endorsed by the powerful National Rifle Association gun lobby in his 2016 campaign, has been wary of angering voters who oppose any curbs on gun ownership, particularly ahead of the November elections in which his party's control of Congress will be at stake. —Reuters

New York to pay Muslim women

NEW YORK: The city of New York has agreed to pay \$180,000 to three Muslim women forced by police to remove their headscarves to have mug shots taken, officials said Wednesday. Each of the women is to receive \$60,000 after the settlements were finalized in a Brooklyn federal court earlier this week, their lawyer Tahanie Aboushi said. Two of the women were arrested in 2015 and one in 2012. All three incidents took place in Brooklyn, New York's most populous borough, she added. The women claimed their religious rights had been violated, suing the city and the New York Police Department, the largest city police force in the United States, which was represented by the city's law department.

New York police have since changed their guidelines to give detainees wearing a religious head covering the option of having their photograph taken in private by a police officer of the same gender. "It's a step in the right direction and it was a collaborative effort to address a gap in the patrol guide," Aboushi said. "The resolution of these matters were in the best interest of all parties involved," said Kimberly Joyce, a spokeswoman for the city of New York's law department. US media identified one of the plaintiffs as a high school pupil at the time, detained on a harassment complaint and said another was cuffed in a dispute over parking. —AFP

Walmart, Dick's - the latest companies to shift stance on guns

NEW YORK: US retailers Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods became the latest companies to shift course on guns Wednesday, announcing they were ending firearms sales to consumers under 21. Responding to the outcry over a Valentine's Day Florida school shooting that saw a 19-year-old kill 17 people, Wednesday's announcements will likely pile more pressure on US politicians to take steps to enact some kind of gun control. Dick's Sporting Goods announced it would remove assault-style rifles from stores and end all gun sales to consumers under 21, calling on politicians to enact "common sense gun reform."

"We have tremendous respect and admiration for the students organizing and making their voices heard regarding gun violence in schools and elsewhere in our country," Dick's chief executive Edward Stack said. "We have heard you. The nation has heard you." Walmart, the world's biggest retailer, later announced that it too would raise to 21 its minimum age to buy firearms and ammunition, the result of a policy review "in light of recent events." "We are also removing items from our website resembling assault-style rifles, including nonlethal airsoft guns and toys," said Walmart, which in 2015 stopped selling assault-style rifles.

Last week other companies, including airlines, insurers and car rental chains announced the end of promotions with the National Rifle Association, revealing a partial shift in US gun politics amid fervent student-led activism and intense social media campaigns. "Are we at a tipping point on guns?" George Washington University political management professor Matthew Dallek asked in

a column Wednesday on Yahoo. A Morning Consult poll found strong support for gun control within the broader population, with nearly two-thirds of registered voters backing tougher measures, including strong majorities among millennials considered important by marketers.

But in the past, public support for gun control has risen right after shootings only to retreat a few weeks later, said Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of Gallup poll. "Before we pronounce that there's been a major shift in terms of American public opinion, we need to see if it's sustained," Newport said. Companies are also keenly aware that they risk alienating customers who support gun rights, including the NRA, the powerful lobbying group which comprises more than five million members and has battled almost all gun regulation. The NRA called last week's announcements "a shameful display of political and civic cowardice."

Trying to stay 'neutral'

A separate Morning Consult/Politico poll showed unfavorability rating among consumers doubled to 24 percent from 12 percent after announcing it ended a discount for NRA members, while its favorability rating was unchanged. Stack said Wednesday he was prepared for a likely backlash following the Dick's announcement. "We know this isn't going to make everyone happy," he told the news and feature show 'Good Morning America.' But after their ordeal "our view was if the kids can be brave enough to organize like this we can be brave enough to take (the guns) out of here."

Companies that have shifted course have tried to thread the needle by championing gun ownership rights. "Our heritage as a company has always been in serving sportsmen and hunters, and we will continue to do so in a responsible way," Walmart said. FedEx has resisted the recent trend, maintaining a discount program for NRA members in spite of aggressive social media campaigns calling for it to be ended. —AFP

International

Friday, March 2, 2018

In Italy election campaign, Facebook, Twitter replace posters and piazzas

Media watchdog seeking self regulation - for now

ROME: The Italian election campaign is different from those of years past when the streets were lined with political posters and leaders rallied voters up and down the country. The placards are few and far between and the only large rallies were held during the final week of the campaign for the March 4 vote. But in the virtual world, Facebook and other social media are full of political content.

Italian parties are harnessing social media to speak to voters, especially young ones, in part because they are strapped for cash. For the first time there will be no public refund to parties for their campaign spending and social media offers affordable

ways to reach voters in a largely unregulated forum. "The balance sheets of the parties range from disastrous to terrifying," said Vincenzo Smaldore, the chief content editor for Openpolis, an online group whose mission is to provide transparency in politics and public affairs.

In terms of regulation "social media are virgin territory for political campaigns," he said. Five years ago, when the 5-Star Movement stormed into parliament for the first time with almost a quarter of the vote, it was the only party to leverage social media. Not any more. "In this election

campaign, there's been an almost total shift to social media," said Pietro Raffa, who runs online content for politicians and parties as a partner with communications consultancy MR & Associati in Milan.

The Internet has surpassed radio as a source of information, Italy's media watchdog Agcom said in a report last month. While TV remains the

top source of information and candidates make daily appearances on talk shows, almost 42 percent of Italians consult the Internet every day, with social media and search engines their main focus. The rapid increase in Internet usage has outpaced lawmakers

and regulators and begun to polarise political discourse.

"There's an echo chamber effect, which is problematic when the objective is to ensure citizens have media pluralism," said Antonio Nicita, a commissioner at Agcom. The far-right League, which has one of the strongest social media presences of the parties, tweets or posts media reports of crimes committed by foreigners daily. The party, part of a centre-right coalition that opinion polls show leading but falling short of an absolute majority, uses "Italians First" as its slogan,



ROME: Italian lawyer Lucia Annibali, current candidate for Italy's Democratic Party (PD, Partito Democratico) for the upcoming March general elections in the Piedmont region, poses during an interview with AFP in Rome. — AFP

gan, seeking to capitalise on fears tied to the arrival of more than 600,000 boat migrants over the past four years.

Amnesty International is monitoring Facebook and Twitter for offensive statements by Italian party leaders and candidates. In the 10 days to Feb. 20, half of all statements it thought fell into

this category came from the League, while the rest came mostly from the other two centre-right parties, it said. The monitoring revealed discourse "dripping with hostility, racism and xenophobia," Amnesty said in a report. League leader Matteo Salvini denied the accusation and said he wanted to meet Amnesty to discuss it. — Reuters

Matteo Renzi, the politician Italians love to hate

ROME: Matteo Renzi, Italy's outspoken former premier has succeeded in rubbing almost everyone in the country up the wrong way, an alarming change in fortune for a man who just a few years ago was considered the darling of Italian politics. "In a matter of months, Matteo became Italy's most unpopular leader," L'Espresso weekly newspaper wrote recently. Vying for a return to Italy's top spot at the head of the ruling Democratic Party (DP), the glib Florentine has a mountain to climb in the March 4 general election.

His party's ratings have been in constant decline. The last polls to be published before the vote gave the DP between 22-23 percent support, lagging behind former premier Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing coalition and the Five Star populists. Such a result would be particularly humiliating for a man whose party clinched 40 percent of the vote in the 2014 European elections. "I can't really explain this hate towards Matteo Renzi," Giovanni Orsina, a political science professor at Rome's Luiss University said. Often accused of an arrogant or authoritarian leadership style, the former premier never managed to deliver on his ambitious promises to revamp Italy and cast away the political old guard.

In 2012, with his sights set on party leadership, he vowed to make Italy the country "where you get a job because of what you know and not who you know," said L'Espresso. But today he is often accused of surrounding himself with his chosen few, frequently fellow Tuscans, who have done little to boost his reputation. One of them is Maria-Elena Boschi. A key minister in Renzi's



Matteo Renzi

former government, the glamorous politician has been dogged by rumours she had a hand in the 2015 state bailout of Etruria bank, where her father was a board member. She remains, nonetheless, one of Renzi's top picks in any future government.

'The scrapper'

But the ambitious upstart nicknamed "the scrapper" has always denied favoritism, purporting to have chosen only "the best". At just 39, Renzi became the country's youngest prime minister in 2014. Showing a tireless work ethic while his wife, Agnese, and three children stayed home in Tuscany, the former boy scout came to office with a vow to revive Italy's lethargic economy. He managed to deliver significant labour market reforms and modest growth, while overseeing the granting of legal recognition to gay relationships for the first time. —AFP

Italian whirlwind election campaign: The best bits

ROME: Unpredictable candidates, clandestine polls, and a cameo appearance by mysterious blonde "Italians". As the March 4 vote to elect Italy's new prime minister nears, here are some of the campaign's most memorable moments:

Slovakians first Far-right leader Matteo Salvini, was ridiculed by opponents after unveiling his party's "Italy First" campaign posters displaying images of fair, blonde families. The suspect "Italians" were actually revealed to be Czech and Slovak models. Salvini defended himself by insisting that, for him, the five million foreigners residing legally in Italy were like Italians, even if he vehemently opposes the idea of granting their children the Italian nationality.

Italy has a ban on publishing poll surveys in the 15-day run-up to the election. However, some websites have tried to sidestep the rule, displaying their predictions under the guise of a horserace. On the race course, "Louis the Subjunctive", Five Star leader Luigi Di Maio's nickname because of his reputation for poor grammar, was outrunning the "Bragger", former premier Matteo Renzi, and was also hot on the heels of the "Burlesque Stable Thoroughbreds", Silvio Berlusconi's right-wing coalition. — AFP

Got a better idea? Tusk asks May on Irish Brexit

Rhetoric sharpening as sides prepare trade talks

BRUSSELS: Donald Tusk defended an EU plan to control Northern Ireland's trade regulation after Brexit which has angered the British, saying he would ask Prime Minister Theresa May if she had any better idea. Before lunching with May in London on the eve of her setting out her vision of an EU-UK trade deal, EU summit chair Tusk said Wednesday's proposal to keep Northern Ireland in an EU customs union, creating possible barriers with the British mainland, was the best option to avoid a "hard border" with EU member Ireland.

"Until now, no-one has come up with anything wiser than that," the European Council president told a conference in Brussels. "In a few hours I will be asking in London whether the UK government has a better idea, that would be as effective in preventing a hard border between Ireland and Northern Ireland." May will lay out her views on how to keep trade open between all of the United Kingdom and the European Union on Friday; Tusk will set out the EU negotiating proposals early next week, preparing for trade talks to begin after May has met the other 27 EU leaders at a summit in Brussels in three weeks time.

Britain argues that it can avoid creating fron-

tier checks in Ireland that could reignite sectarian conflict in the north by technological and administrative innovations for a "smart border" that would maintain "frictionless trade". In publishing on Wednesday its first draft of a withdrawal treaty which both sides hope to agree by October, the EU said it would be happy to consider that. But in the meantime it was writing into clear legal language the "backstop" position it insists May agreed to in December. That position, however, left May's key Unionist allies in Belfast furious that the EU plan would threaten their constitutional link to the British mainland.

EU-Northern Ireland's plan angered UK and Belfast

'Pure illusion'

Rhetoric on both sides has toughened in recent weeks as the difficulties of reaching a deal to avoid economic chaos when Britain leaves in 13 months have come into sharper focus. The pound softened yesterday as investors focused on warnings from Brussels that a deal, which would also give business an extra couple of years to adjust to Brexit, was not yet guaranteed. While it is not clear what trade solutions May will present on Friday, suggestions that it will involve different "baskets" of economic sectors differentiated by their degree of regulatory alignment with the EU



LONDON: Pro-EU demonstrators wave flags outside 10 Downing Street in central London yesterday. — AFP

prompted Tusk last week to describe such ideas as "pure illusion". Others call it "cherry-picking".

Yesterday, at a forum run by the EU employers federation Business Europe, the conservative former Polish premier renewed his skeptical appraisal of talk of "frictionless trade" once May carries out a plan to leave the single market and customs union. "There can be no frictionless trade outside of the customs union and the Sin-

gle Market," Tusk said. "Friction is an inevitable side effect of Brexit. By nature." Britons opposed to leaving the EU are fighting a rearguard action that seeks to use May's weakness in her own Conservative party and in parliament to disrupt it—though there is little sign public opinion has shifted far from the roughly 50-50 split which delivered a narrow vote for Brexit in a 2016 referendum. — Reuters

Hamburg Islamist knife attacker gets life in prison

HAMBURG: A Palestinian jihadist who killed one man and wounded six other people in a German supermarket knife rampage last year was sentenced yesterday to life in prison. Ahmad Alhaw, 27, had admitted to the murder and assaults in the river port city of Hamburg. In delivering the sentence, the judge noted the "particular severity" of the crime, lowering Alhaw's chances of obtaining early release on parole. Justice Norbert Sakuth said Alhaw, with his "unstable personality", had acted alone after falling prey to the propaganda of the so-called Islamic State jihadist group, adding that "in this way the IS succeeded". Prosecutors told the court Alhaw had hoped to kill as many German Christians as possible to avenge the suffering of Muslims worldwide, and had hoped "he would die as a martyr". Alhaw entered a supermarket on July 28, snatched a 20-centimetre knife from the shelves, unwrapped it and fatally stabbed a 50-year-old man.

As panic broke out, he slashed and stabbed

at others inside and then outside the shop, shouting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest), and also wounding a 50-year-old woman and four men. "I saw him run toward me, covered in blood. He was radiating bloodlust," a 20-year-old supermarket worker who locked himself in a backroom recounted in court. Justice Sakuth said about the attacker that "if he could have, he would have killed more people".

Multiple warnings

Outside the supermarket, seven mostly migrant bystanders confronted the screaming attacker, hurling rocks and chairs at him and then subduing him until police arrived. The men—among them a 30-year-old man of Turkish descent who was wounded in the struggle—have since been celebrated and honored for their courage. One of them, Afghan asylum seeker Toufiq Arab, told Bild daily: "I'm not a hero, I only did my duty."

The Islamist attack was Germany's first since December 2016 when Tunisian Anis Amri ploughed a stolen truck through a Berlin Christmas market in an attack that claimed 12 lives. Germany's parliament decided this week that the Amri case will be subject of a special inquiry to assess how he was able to slip through the net of multiple security services before staging his bloody attack. — AFP

German man arrested with Afghan Taleban

KANDAHAR: A German national has been arrested with the Taleban in Afghanistan's insurgency-racked Helmand province, Afghan officials said, one of the only Europeans found among the militants throughout the 16-year war. The man, who calls himself Abdul Wadood and was pictured wearing a black turban with a long, reddish beard, identified himself as a German resident of Frankfurt and spoke German, provincial officials and the Afghan army have said.

He was serving as an adviser to Maulavi Nasir, the commander of the Taleban's elite "Red Unit" in Helmand, said Abdul Qadeer Bahadurzai, a spokesman for the 215th Army Corps—a claim that was also made by a local police chief. The Taleban's Red Units serve as the insurgents' special forces and have carried out many fatal attacks on the Afghan army and police. Bahadurzai said yesterday the man has no identity card or passport.

There was no immediate statement from German officials in Kabul. Afghan commandos aided by the air force arrested the man during a raid on a Taleban mine-making centre in Gereschk district on Monday, officials said, adding that he was taken first to Camp Bastion and then on to

Kandahar. "This is the first time a European national has been arrested in Helmand," Omar Zwak, spokesman for the provincial governor, told AFP. It is also believed to be one of the first times any European has been detained with the Taleban in Afghanistan since the US invasion in late 2001.

International forces fighting in the country have spoken in the past of hearing European accents on intercepted Taleban radio transmissions, and in 2009 NATO forces reportedly killed an unidentified insurgent with a tattoo of English football team Aston Villa. But—unlike with international jihadist groups such as the Islamic State group or Al-Qaeda—citizens of Western nations are almost unknown among the Taleban ranks, with most foreigners hailing from Pakistan, Central Asia or Arab nations. Perhaps the most famous Western fighter was John Walker Lindh, the so-called "American Taleban", who was captured in Afghanistan and was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2002.

Time in Pakistan

In the photographs shared by the Afghan military the man, who appears to be in his 40s, is flanked by two members of the Afghan special forces dressed in combat gear and with night vision goggles pulled up onto their helmets. He is dressed in a traditional Afghan long shirt and wide trousers worn under a khaki military jacket. Bahadurzai said three suspects were detained in total during the raid. — AFP

S Korea leader lashes Japan over wartime use of 'comfort women'

Moon says Japan cannot declare the issue settled

SEOUL: South Korean President Moon Jae-in described Japan's wartime use of "comfort women" as a "crime against humanity" yesterday in some of his strongest comments yet, sparking an immediate protest from his key ally in containing North Korea. Moon said during a speech marking a national holiday commemorating Korean resistance to Japanese occupation - his first since taking office last year - that Japan was in no position to declare the emotionally charged issue settled. "To resolve the comfort women issue, the Japanese Government, the perpetrator, should not say the matter is closed," Moon said. "The issue of a crime against humanity committed in time of war cannot be closed with just a word. A genuine resolution of unfortunate history is to remember it and learn a lesson from it."

His comments drew an immediate rebuke from Tokyo. Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga described Moon's comments as "extremely regrettable". Suga, speaking at a regular briefing, also urged cooperation between South Korea and Japan to tackle the threat posed by North Korea. The two Koreas have pursued a thaw in relations that began

ahead of last month's Winter Olympics in South Korea, but Seoul remains a key part of the international push to increase pressure on Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Japan and South Korea share a bitter history that includes Japan's 1910-45 colonization of the peninsula and the use of "comfort women", Japan's euphemism for women - many of them Korean - forced to work in its wartime brothels. Japan apologized to the women and provided a 1 billion yen (\$9.4 million) fund to help them under a 2015 deal with Moon's conservative predecessor, but South Korea has recently sought to revisit the issue. "These details were agreed by South Korea and Japan and we find it unacceptable and extremely regrettable," Suga said.

Historic tensions

Moon, speaking at the site of a former jail where Korean independence fighters were imprisoned by Japanese forces, said South Korea was not looking for "special treatment" from Tokyo. However, he hoped Japan pursued "sincere self-reflection" and "squarely face the truth of history and justice with the universal con-

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Japan protests,
says comments
'regrettable'
”



SEOUL: Activists dressed as colonial-era Japanese soldiers re-enact a crackdown of the independence movement during celebrations of the 99th Independence Movement Day against the 1910-1945 Japanese colonial rule in Seoul yesterday. — AFP

science of humanity". Japan also formally complained on Monday after South Korea's foreign minister raised the issue at the top UN rights body, warning that it should not be allowed to harm bilateral relations at a critical time in East

Asia. A South Korean panel set up to investigate the deal concluded late last year that the agreement failed to meet the needs of the thousands of girls and women forced to work in Japan's military brothels. — Reuters

New Zealand's spy papers reveal 1981 bid to kill Queen

WELLINGTON: A mentally disturbed teenager tried to assassinate Queen Elizabeth II during a 1981 visit to New Zealand and police covered up the botched attempt, according to official documents released yesterday. Christopher Lewis fired a single shot towards the Queen's car as she toured the South Island city of Dunedin, the documents from New Zealand's Security Intelligence Service (SIS) spy agency revealed.

No one was hurt and police reportedly assured members of the royal party who asked about a gunshot that they had simply heard a firework exploding. Lewis, 17 at the time, was picked up soon after on an unrelated armed robbery charge and made a rambling confession about his attempt on the monarch's life. While police said he was delusional and "lives in a dream world" they found a .22 rifle and spent cartridge in the building where he said the attempt took place.

He claimed to be a member of a right-wing organization called the National Imperial Guerilla Army, which police concluded had only three members. Officers at the time decided against charging him with treason over the October 1981 assassination attempt but pursued firearms and robbery charges. The SIS documents, released publicly in response to a media request and seen by AFP, show police were concerned the incident would become public and conspired to keep it secret.

The New Zealand Herald said authorities were worried it might

jeopardize future royal visits to the former British colony. "Lewis did indeed originally intend to assassinate the Queen," the documents say. "However (he) did not have a suitable vantage point from which to fire, nor a sufficiently high-powered rifle for the range from the target." Lewis had a string of serious criminal convictions and was in jail for murder when he killed himself in 1997.

Floral nightie

The Queen's role as head of the Commonwealth has made her a high-profile target for extremist groups and the mentally unwell over the years. In 1982, unemployed decorator Michael Fagan had a few drinks and scaled the walls of Buckingham Palace, climbing up a drainpipe to enter the Queen's London residence. He wandered into her bedroom and reportedly sat on the end of the bed for a chat with the perturbed monarch before a palace staffer lured him away with the promise of a shot of whiskey.

Fagan later described the Queen's floral nightie and said he was motivated by a desire to meet his head of state. Another 17-year-old threatened the Queen's security in 1981, just four months before Lewis' attempt, when Marcus Sarjeant fired six blanks at her during the trooping the color ceremony in London. He was quickly overpowered and sentenced to five years in prison for treason. An unconfirmed assassination plot occurred in Australia in 1970 when a train carrying the Queen hit a log as she was travelling to Lithgow, west of Sydney. A local police officer said unknown extremists put the log there to derail the train and send it down an embankment. It turned out the engine was travelling too slowly and merely pushed it along the tracks. There was a far more sinister scheme in 1981, when the Queen opened an oil terminal in the remote Shetland Islands, north of Scotland. It was the height of The Troubles in Northern Ireland and the anti-British IRA smuggled a powerful bomb into the facility. However, a detonator failed to fire and the Queen was unharmed. — AFP

Sri Lanka probes 'disappearances'

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has appointed commissioners to a special panel tasked with investigating war-era disappearances, three years after President Maithripala Sirisena was elected promising justice for victims of the island's bloody ethnic conflict. The Office of Missing Persons was officially launched Wednesday by Sirisena, who has faced international censure for repeated delays in probing atrocities by troops and Tamil rebels during the decades-long civil war.

Sri Lanka narrowly avoided sanctions when Sirisena came to power in January 2015 pledging investigations into war-time abuses, which the previous regime refused to even acknowledge. Parliament agreed two years ago to the first steps toward reconciling its war-era past-tracing about 20,000 people who went missing during 37 years of fighting.

But the process stalled amid resistance from the army and Sirisena's own coalition, which has been plagued by infighting in recent times. "The OMP is tasked with determining the status of all missing persons in Sri Lanka and is the first pillar of the transitional justice mechanisms," the government said in a statement. The panel has the power to recommend compensation and clear the way for next of kin to take legal action against those responsible for the disappearance of their loved ones. The government appointed seven commissioners to the panel, which will be headed by senior lawyer Saliya Peiris. — AFP

International

US-Taiwan travel bill angers Beijing as tensions heighten

US Senate passes bill to promote close ties with Taiwan

BEIJING: China expressed anger yesterday after the US Senate passed a bill promoting closer US ties with Taiwan, but the step drew praise from the self-ruled island which pledged to deepen cooperation. The move adds to tensions between China and the United States, already at loggerheads over trade, with President Xi Jinping's close economic advisor Liu He in Washington this week to try and avert a trade war. Several top US steel and aluminum executives have been invited to the White House later on Thursday for what could be a major trade announcement, according to two people familiar with the meeting.

US President Donald Trump has vowed to take steps to crack down on imports of steel and aluminum and has been considering imposing hefty tariffs on imports of the metals from China and other countries. Beijing considers democratic Taiwan to be a wayward province and integral part of "one China", ineligible for state-to-state relations, and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said though the bill was not legally binding and seriously violates the "one China" principle.

"China is strongly dissatisfied with this and resolutely opposes it, and has already lodged stern representations with the US side," she told a daily news briefing. The "one China" principle is the foundation for China-US ties, Hua added. China urges the United States to cease official exchanges with Taiwan and "prudently and appropriately handle issues related to Taiwan to avoid seriously interfering with and damaging China-US relations", she said. The Senate passed the Taiwan Travel Act by unanimous consent. It passed the House of Representatives in January, also without opposition. The legislation only needs Trump's signature to become law.

The bill says it should be US policy to allow officials at all levels to travel to Taiwan to meet their Taiwanese counterparts, permit high-level Taiwanese officials to enter the United States "under respectful conditions" and meet with US officials, and encourage Taiwanese economic and cultural representatives to conduct business in the United States. White House officials did not immediately respond when asked if Trump planned to sign the legislation. It would be unusual for a president to veto a measure that passed unanimously.

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China claims Taiwan as its sacred territory



Taiwan's Foreign Ministry thanked the United States for the unanimous support for the bill and for the US government's increasingly friendly and open attitude towards Taiwan.

Taiwan praises 'joint values'

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TAIPEI: Visitors walk past the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall in Taipei. Taiwan protesters splashed red paint on the coffin of former ruler Chiang Kai-shek, calling for authorities to speed up a plan to erase all symbols of the island's authoritarian past. —AFP

The Foreign Ministry will keep developing an even more substantive cooperative relationship with the United States, to promote both sides' joint values and mutually-beneficial interests," it said. Taiwan's Presidential Office said the United States was its most important international ally, and that it would discuss the matter with the United States and further strengthen relations. —Reuters

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Venezuela's woes spread to zoos as animals feed on each other

CARACAS: The situation in economically depressed Venezuela is so dire, workers at one zoo are slaughtering animals to feed others—with two emaciated pumas poster kids of sorts for the distressing state of affairs. The zoo-located in the town of San Francisco in Zulia state-closed down this month after horrific pictures surfaced showing starving animals. The list of malnourished creatures includes a lion, a Bengal tiger, a jaguar and several birds of prey, zoo staffers told AFP recently.

Ducks, pigs and goats have been sacrificed to feed other animals. The bone-thin pumas were saved from poachers, and photos of them published in the newspaper Panorama have shocked people across this oil-rich country-saddled by hyperinflation and acute food and medicine shortages as a result of lower petroleum prices. The big cats were skinny when they first arrived at the zoo, but later got better. However, with Venezuela's latest crisis "it is as if they shrank," one zoo worker said.

A male and a female Andean condor, born in captivity and brought to the park as part of a breeding program to save the endangered species, have gone weeks without being fed properly. Two birds of prey were so hungry they cannibalized a cage mate, staffers said. "The Bengal tiger

had been the heftiest, and the lion, as it was very old, was skinny but it also lost weight," a staffer said. To get around the lack of meat, zoo officials started hunting iguanas, which run wild in the zoo, and fishing tilapia from lagoons in the facility.

'Dark age' for zoos

Besides the lack of feed, Zulia's only zoo, on the border with Colombia, has been beset by theft. In 2016, at least 40 animals including a tapir were stolen, presumably by people looking to salvage meat-as Venezuelans are struggling mightily. The minimum wage, equivalent to \$27 a month at the official exchange rate, is barely enough to buy two kilos (4.5 pounds) of meat. So people are living off rice and tubers like yuca-also known as cassava according to a study by major Venezuelan universities. It said a staggering 87 percent of the population was living in poverty last year. Dirwings Arrieta, the mayor of San Francisco, has announced an overhaul at the zoo including upgrades to the water system and raises for staff-but said nothing about all the hungry animals. Other zoos are also hurting.

In 2016 at the Caricuao Zoo in Caracas, a horse was killed by assailants who salvaged its flesh to eat. In the state of Falcon, two wild pigs were stolen from a zoo. Peacocks and other birds have been stolen from Bararida Zoo in Barquisimeto, 250 kilometers southwest of Caracas, said Carlos Silva, a veterinarian who has worked there for 13 years. Citing the situation in Zulia, Mexican actor and philanthropist Raul Julia, who runs a wildlife foundation in California, has offered to help the animals. Silva said zoos in Venezuela are enduring a "dark age." "What we have seen in Zulia is something you see in countries at war. All because of politics, of which the animals know nothing. —AFP

Putin unveils new nuclear weapons to counter West

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin unveiled an array of new nuclear weapons yesterday, in one of his most bellicose speeches in years, saying they could hit almost any point in the world and not be intercepted. Speaking weeks before an election he is expected to win, Putin also said that a nuclear attack on any of Moscow's allies would be regarded as an attack on Russia itself and draw an immediate response. Putin, who polls indicate should be easily re-elected on March 18, backed his tough rhetoric with video clips of some of the new missiles he was talking about, which were projected on a giant screen behind him at the conference hall in central Moscow where he was addressing Russia's political elite.

"They have not succeeded in holding Russia back," said Putin, referring to the West. "Now they need to take account of a new reality and understand that everything I have said today is not a bluff." Among the new weapons that Putin said were either in development or ready: a new intercontinental ballistic missile, a small nuclear warhead that could be attached to cruise missiles, underwater nuclear drones, a supersonic weapon and a laser weapon. The audience, made up of Russian lawmakers and other leading figures, frequently stood up and applauded his presentation, which culminated with the Russian national anthem being played.

Putin, who has dominated his country's political landscape for the last 18 years and often used anti-Western rhetoric to mobilize support, said the technological advances meant that NATO's build-up on Russia's borders and the roll-out of a US anti-missile system would be rendered useless. "I hope that everything that was said today will sober up any potential aggressor," said Putin. "Unfriendly steps towards Russia such as the deployment of the (US) anti-missile system and of NATO infrastructure nearer our borders and such like, from a military point of view, will become ineffective." —Reuters

Lifestyle

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A model presents a creation by Manish Arora during the 2018/2019 fall/winter collection fashion show yesterday in Paris.— AFP

World's first hand-painted film vies for an Oscar

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This file photo shows Joanna Maleszyk hanging up reproductions of Vincent van Gogh paintings at a film studio in the northern Polish city of Gdansk.—AFP photos

WORLD'S FIRST HAND-PAINTED FILM VIES FOR AN OSCAR

Vying for an Oscar, “Loving Vincent” is the world’s first animated feature film painted by hand—all 65,000 frames—in the distinct style of Vincent van Gogh. Centered on a probe into his untimely death, the film was shot on a shoestring budget of \$5.5 million (4.5 million euros). That is 30 times less than Disney’s “Coco”, one of the film’s four Oscar rivals. For director Dorota Kobiela, “Loving Vincent” has been a seven-year labor of love combining her twin passions of cinema and painting.

“Van Gogh’s style was perfect for the project; his paintings show all the details of his life, his day-to-day habits, his house, his room, his friends,” Kobiela told AFP ahead of Sunday’s Oscar ceremonies in Los Angeles. Kobiela and co-director Hugh Welchman already have one Oscar under their belt; their BreakThru Productions film company won an Academy Award in 2008 for the animated short “Peter and the Wolf”, based on the story and music by Sergei Prokofiev. “We are the underdogs! In our category it’s normally dominated by Disney and Pixar but I have a feeling we might be one of the big upsets this year,” Welchman, who is also Kobiela’s husband, told AFP.

25 secs per day

After five years of pre-production, it took another two years for 125 artists from around the globe to bring the opus to life under Kobiela’s watchful eye. Working in a massive studio in Poland’s Baltic port city of Gdansk, they based their oil paintings on scenes initially shot on film with actors. The film includes representations of van Gogh’s most famous paintings such as “The Starry Night”. Van Gogh, known for his bold colors and rough, vibrant painting style, is considered one of the most revolutionary painters of the 19th century. Painting the 93-minute-long movie was a painstaking task.

“The pace of work was very slow, averaging a quarter of a second of the film a day,” said Kobiela, who spent seven years on the project. A single second of the film represents an average of 12 hand-painted frames. Each artist completed an average of six paintings a day, amounting to a

half-second of the film for simple scenes. But according to Kobiela, the quality of the hand-painted frames surpasses digital animation, making them well worth the extra effort. “Often in animation, we have the problem that facial expressions are limited. But in oil painting, we can show even greater expression if the portrait is painted properly,” she told AFP.



This file photo shows Danuta Roman recreating a Vincent van Gogh painting at a film studio in the northern Polish city of Gdansk.

Doubts about suicide

“Loving Vincent” explores both van Gogh’s works and his death, widely regarded as a suicide, from a gunshot wound. Based on an original script by Pole Jacek Dehnel, the film follows Armand Roulin, the son of the postman from Arles who was the subject of several of van Gogh’s paintings. Doubting van Gogh committed suicide, Armand travels to Paris to find out more about his death.

The artist was only 37 when he died after suffering frequent bouts of mental illness including the infamous episode in which he sliced off part of his left ear. Five million people have already seen “Loving Vincent” in cinemas across the globe. Its makers are already thinking about their next project, which could be a horror film based on the disturbing canvases of Spanish painter Francisco Goya. — AFP

How young Guillermo became monster-mad director Del Toro

Long before he was the celebrated director of fantasy romance “The Shape of Water,” this year’s top Oscar contender with 13 nominations, Guillermo del Toro was fascinated with monsters and the movies. Teachers in his hometown, Guadalajara, Mexico, remember him coming to class with giant cockroaches, and friends recall helping him shoot his first movie at their school—an eight-millimeter short film featuring a gelatinous monster.

Those who knew him before he was Guillermo del Toro, the award-winning filmmaker, remember him as just Guillermo—an affable teenager with a love of strange creatures, a soft spot for misfits and explosive creativity. “You could already see his imagination, his fantastical way of interpreting reality, in the short films he was making as a teenager,” says Anne Marie Meier, a Swiss film critic who met Del Toro when he was 16 and taking a screenwriting workshop that she taught.

“He was passionate about insects,” she says with a laugh. “He had a competition going with the other kids to see who could find the biggest cockroach in Guadalajara. He would show up to class saying, ‘I’ve got one that’s seven centimeters!’” Meier, who lives in Guadalajara, also remembers Del Toro as a voracious consumer of popular culture. “He loved to play with whatever caught his interest. He feasted on culture, read comics, drew graphic novels and went to the movies all the time,” she says.

First films

“The Shape of Water,” set during the Cold War, tells the story of a mute cleaning woman who falls in love with a strange amphibious monster held captive at the top-secret US government research facility where she works. Adored by critics, it is up for several of the top prizes at Sunday’s Oscars, including best picture, best director and best actress. Del Toro has come a long way—yet in some ways not far at all—from his first teenage films, says photographer Mariano Aparicio, who helped the director make his first movies.

Aparicio has fond memories of their first effort: a short called “Nightmare,” which they made when they were 17. “There were no video cameras then. We had a Super 8,” he tells AFP. “It was pure silliness. It was a lot of fun though. The movie was about a gelatinous monster that comes out of the toilets and starts running around our school.” They filmed the movie together, taking turns with the camera, he says. But the script was Del Toro’s. “You had to send the film to the United States to be developed. It was an agonizingly long wait. Then you edited it with a special cutter and glued it together,” says Aparicio.

After “Nightmare” (parts one and two), Del Toro made “Matilde,” a horror movie filmed at his grandmother’s house. It bore many of his future trademarks, blending the supernatural with the religious imagery he grew up with in his devoutly Catholic household. Del Toro’s mother, Guadalupe, played the lead—a wheelchair-bound woman who gets swallowed up by an ominous crack in her wall. His mother also appeared in one of his first professional films, “Geometria” (1987), which featured his father, as well.

Terror and wonder

Del Toro, 53, comes from a world infused with all the terror and wonder of a fairy tale. When he was a boy, his father won the lottery, then used his newfound fortune to build an empire of car dealerships. Del Toro set about building a fantastical world within the family’s stately new mansion, covering his bedroom walls in aliens and monsters. But, as in many of his movies, the real monsters in the story turned out to be human—in particular, the people who kidnapped his father in 1998, when Del Toro was just starting to make it in Hollywood.



This file photo shows Mexican director Guillermo Del Toro receiving the Golden Lion for Best Film with the movie “The Shape of Water” during the award ceremony of the 74th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP

The harrowing ordeal ended with fellow director James Cameron helping Del Toro put together the \$1 million cash ransom to get his father released. After that, Del Toro moved the rest of the family to the United States. Today, he splits his time between Los Angeles and Toronto. But “at bottom, he’s still fundamentally Mexican,” Meier says. “His protagonists all have some weakness. I think it’s important for him to have fragile characters. That’s typical of Mexican cinema,” she says.

From the vampires in “Cronos” to the magical fable “Pan’s Labyrinth” to the title demon in “Hellboy,” Del Toro’s work has often featured creatures from the

depths of his imagination. Despite the dark shadows that have haunted his life and many of his films and the fact that he has become one of Hollywood’s hottest directors—friends say Del Toro still has the same gentle, fun-loving, sometimes mischievous side he had in his youth.

Mexican movie critic Leonardo Garcia Tsao has known Del Toro since he was a 20-something who “only wanted one thing in life: to make movies.” The critic tells a story of finding himself at the Cannes film festival one year, stuck in a hotel room next to a horrifically noisy neighbor watching television. He pounded on the wall relentlessly, to no avail: the neighbor was apparently determined to watch TV at full blast. “In the morning, I opened the door, and it was him,” he says with a laugh. “Guillermo was my noisy neighbor.” — AFP

Veteran singer Joan Baez muses on Trump ... and Hitler

Joan Baez is musing about Donald Trump and even Hitler and what she believes is their shared lack of empathy. "Most of the weird ones have their pets," she told AFP, referring to Hitler's German Shepherd, Blondi. "But I don't think Trump could even have a dog. I don't think there is any feeling for anybody but himself and his money." "I mean Hitler wanted to rule the world. Trump wants to make money." The legendary 1960s protest singer may be on what she insists is her final tour, "Fare Thee Well", but she has no intention of going quietly.

Although she spends more time these days painting than on music, her "retirement" may be more theoretical than real. "If somebody calls me to do 20 minutes at a folk festival... or to do something that supports the resistance to evil because of the political climate we're in, then I'll do it," said the 77-year-old. Baez said that standing up to Trump is far more difficult than the more straightforward battles her generation had to face. "For us it was easy... There was Vietnam and civil rights. Now there are 50 Vietnams going on in the world and there is this insane narcissistic crazy person creating a situation we could not have invented," she said. But the singer was cheered by the courage of teenage survivors of the Florida high school shooting taking on the US president and the gun lobby.



In this file photo US folk singer Joan Baez performs in Carhaix-Plouguer, western of France, during the Vieilles Charrues music festival. — AFP

Revolutionary teenagers

"That young woman (Emma Gonzalez) was astounding and it might take a revolution from the 15-year-olds" to rein in Trump, she said. "The Million Woman March wasn't enough to move this administration because they're too smart. Trump himself in some ways is a moron and he's very, very sick," said Baez, whose father was Mexican. "But he has a way of manipulating words and people and lying and lying and lying so we can't keep up with him." However, "thanks to Trump there's been another explosion (in feminist consciousness) with #MeToo" that we haven't seen for decades.

"It's really women saying we've been kicked around all of these years and we've had enough. It's huge." There is no such sound and fury, however, in Baez's first album in a decade, "Whistle Down the Wind", which is released Friday. Instead it is a thoughtful meditation on growing old. The album, which she recorded with Steve Earle, is about "reflecting on the life of a 77-year-old woman and the insanity" of staring 80 in the face, she told AFP during a trip to the French capital. "Oh my God, it's very near so I started saying to myself '80! 80! 80!' until I could form the words without getting crazy.

"We all try to avoid getting old," said the singer, whose mother lived to 100, and who insists she is not living in dread of the Grim Reaper. "I love dancing. If I can't find a partner then I'll dance by myself. I practice pilates, I eat very carefully, I'm very disciplined and my mother and father had good bones."

Writer's block

The wooden house surrounded by trees that Baez has lived in for almost half a century in Woodside, California, is almost a character in her new album, which is bookended by two Tom Waits songs, the title track and "Last Leaf on the Tree". These days Baez feels like a last leaf herself with friends like Paul Simon and Neil Diamond hanging up their guitars. But she is not losing sleep over it—nor is she crying over her own writer's block. That the woman who penned the classic "Diamonds & Rust" about her relationship with Bob Dylan can no longer write may be a tragedy to her fans.

But Baez is sanguine about it. "Either it comes or it doesn't and it stopped happening. I was astonished that all of a sudden I couldn't but it was not a big deal." "I have written only one song in my career that was A+ and that was Diamonds & Rust," she insisted. Dylan once said her "voice was like that of a siren from some Greek island. Just the sound of it could put you into a spell." If Baez is bothered by forever being reminded of their brief-if iconic relationship so long ago, she doesn't show it.

"There are worse things in the world than to be linked with Bob Dylan for the rest of your life. But there hasn't been any connection (between us) for 30 years. "What's left now is his extraordinary music. When I'm on stage I look forward to singing a Bob Dylan song because there's something about the way he wrote and the things he wrote. "Somebody could stand on the stage and sing 25 Bob Dylan songs and everybody in the audience knows them. Leonard Cohen may be a better writer but there's not the same relationship with the public. He earned the (Nobel) prize," Baez said. — AFP



This file photo shows Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger and Keith Richards (right) perform during the inauguration concert of the U Arena hall, new stadium of the French Rugby Union club Racing 92 in Nanterre. — AFP

Richards sorry for recommending Jagger vasectomy

The Rolling Stones have been rocking together for a half century but the legendary tensions between Keith Richards and Mick Jagger look to be very much alive. Richards apologized Wednesday to his bandmate after the guitarist suggested that the fecund frontman needed a vasectomy. "Mick's a randy old b*****d," Richards told The Wall Street Journal Magazine. "It's time for the snip—you can't be a father at that age. Those poor kids!" he said.

Jagger in December 2016 became a father for the eighth time when he was 73. His son, Deveraux Jagger, was born to his girlfriend Melanie Hamrick, a ballerina in New York who is four decades his junior. "I deeply regret the

comments I made about Mick in the WSJ which were completely out of line," Richards wrote on Twitter, saying he also apologized to Jagger in person. The Stones have endured despite decades of hard-living and internal tumult.

In 2010, Richards published a memoir, "Life," in which he openly derided Jagger as a needy prima donna and said the other bandmates mocked him as "Her Majesty." Richards even cast doubt on Jagger's private parts, saying the swaggering singer had a "tiny todger." The latest incident comes just after the Stones—some of the highest-earning musicians on the live circuit—announced a new tour leg of Europe to begin on May 17 in Dublin. — AFP

DiCaprio and Pitt team up for new Quentin Tarantino movie

Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt—two of Hollywood's biggest stars—are teaming up for Quentin Tarantino's next project, a movie set in the 1969 Hollywood hippy era around the Charles Manson murders. Movie studio Sony Pictures said on Wednesday that the film was called "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood" and will feature DiCaprio as the former star of a Western TV series, and Pitt as his longtime stunt double. It's the first time the two actors have starred in a feature film together.

"Both are struggling to make it in a Hollywood they don't recognize anymore. But Rick (DiCaprio) has a very famous next-door neighbor ... Sharon Tate," Sony Pictures said in a statement. Tate, the pregnant actress wife of director Roman Polanski, was murdered in 1969 by followers of Manson, one of America's most notorious criminals. Manson died in November 2017 at the age of 83 while serving a life sentence.

The movie is to be released on Aug 9, 2019, exactly 50 years after Tate and four friends were stabbed or shot dead. Tarantino said he had been working on the script for five years and had lived in the Los Angeles area for most of his life,

"including in 1969, when I was seven years old." "I'm very excited to tell this story of an LA and a Hollywood that don't exist anymore. And I couldn't be happier about the dynamic teaming of DiCaprio and Pitt," he said in a statement.

DiCaprio won an Oscar in 2016 for his role in "The Revenant" while Pitt was Oscar-nominated for performances in "Moneyball" and "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button." Tarantino has two Oscars for the screenplays of "Django Unchained" and "Pulp Fiction," both of which he also directed. — Reuters



Leonardo DiCaprio and Brad Pitt



MANISH ARORA
FALL-WINTER COLLECTION



Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations by Manish Arora during the 2018/2019 fall/winter collection fashion show yesterday in Paris. — AFP photos

Burberry picks Riccardo Tisci as new creative officer

Luxury British fashion house Burberry yesterday announced the appointment of Riccardo Tisci, formerly of Givenchy, as its new chief creative officer to replace Christopher Bailey. The 43-year-old Italian, who was creative director at the famed French fashion house from 2005 to 2017, will take over the reins at Burberry on March 12. He is credited with reviving Givenchy by cultivating links with celebrities, including by designing stage outfits for the tours of Madonna, Beyonce and Rihanna, and directing the artwork for an album by Jay Z and Kanye West.

Tisci will be based in London and direct all Burberry's collections, presenting his first in September, the company said. Chief executive Marco Gobbetti said he was "delighted" at the appointment, adding: "Riccardo is one of the most talented designers of our time. "His designs have an elegance that is con-

temporary and his skill in blending streetwear with high fashion is highly relevant to today's luxury consumer. "Riccardo's creative vision will reinforce the ambitions we have for Burberry and position the brand firmly in luxury."

Tisci said he was honoured to take over and pleased to be reuniting with Gobbetti, who was chief executive of Givenchy between 2004 and 2008. "I have an enormous respect for Burberry's British heritage and global appeal and I am excited about the potential of this exceptional brand," he said. Bailey presented his final show at last month's London Fashion Week, bowing out after 17 years. — AFP



In this file photo Fashion designer Riccardo Tisci acknowledges the audience at the end of the Givenchy 2017 Spring/Summer ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP



In this photograph tourists look at the historic Badshahi Mosque in Lahore. — AFP photos



Tourists visit the historic Badshahi Mosque in Lahore.



Tourists visit the Shahi Hammam, one of the only surviving 400-year-old Turkish baths in the sub-continent, in Pakistan's historic and cultural city of Lahore.

PAKISTAN AIMS TO REVIVE GLORY OF ANCIENT MUGHAL CITY LAHORE



Vendors wait for customers on the colorful “food street” in the Pakistan's historic and cultural city of Lahore.



Tourists watch a colorful dancing fountain at the greater Iqbal Park in Pakistan's historic and cultural city of Lahore.

Perched on scaffolding, restoration experts chip away at decades of grime and repair broken mosaic tiles in a bid to save the colossal murals depicting historic battles and regal ceremonies on the walls of Lahore fort. The painstaking work is part of efforts to preserve Lahore's crumbling architectural history as officials juggle conserving its diverse heritage with building modern infrastructure in Pakistan's chaotic second city. The metropolis, which once served as the capital of the Mughal empire that stretched across much of the subcontinent, has been subsumed into a myriad of civilizations across the centuries.

This rich past is most visible in the milieu of architecture salted across the Walled City of Lahore—from Hindu temples and Mughal forts to Sikh gurdwaras and administrative office built during the Raj. “You get a history of a thousand years, 500 year-old houses and monuments and mosques, shrines and a very peaceful atmosphere,” says Kamran Lashari, director general of the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA). Prime among them, and dating back to the 11th century, the Lahore fort was first built of mud and was then later reinforced with stone over the centuries by a long cast of Mughal emperors who oversaw its expansion and the accompanying artwork.

But periods of conflict along with searing heat, monsoon rains and years of neglect have taken a toll on the fort. Despite the onset of decay, experts suggest the city's vast Islamic architectural heritage could make it a contender to rival more established Silk Road travel destinations. “Lahore can easily compete with Samarkand. It nearly matches Ispahan,” says Sophie Makariou, president of the Parisian-based National Museum of Asian Arts. Makariou adds that its failure to shine is more to do with safety concerns that have plagued the nation after multiple attacks. “Due to the bad reputation of Pakistan, it remains unknown,” she explains.

Pearl of the Punjab

But as security across Pakistan continues to improve, officials are hoping to revive Lahore's lost glory. More than 40 conservationists with the WCLA—including engineers, architects and ce-

ramists from across the globe—are currently working on restoring the mosaic mural on the fort's exterior. “It's one of the largest murals in the world. It contains over 600 tile mosaic panels and frescos,” says Emaan Sheikh from the Agha Khan Trust for Culture. Restoration of the mural is just part of a larger project to refurbish the fort, which includes conservation projects in the royal kitchen, the summer palace and a basement, according to WCLA's director general Kamran Lashari.

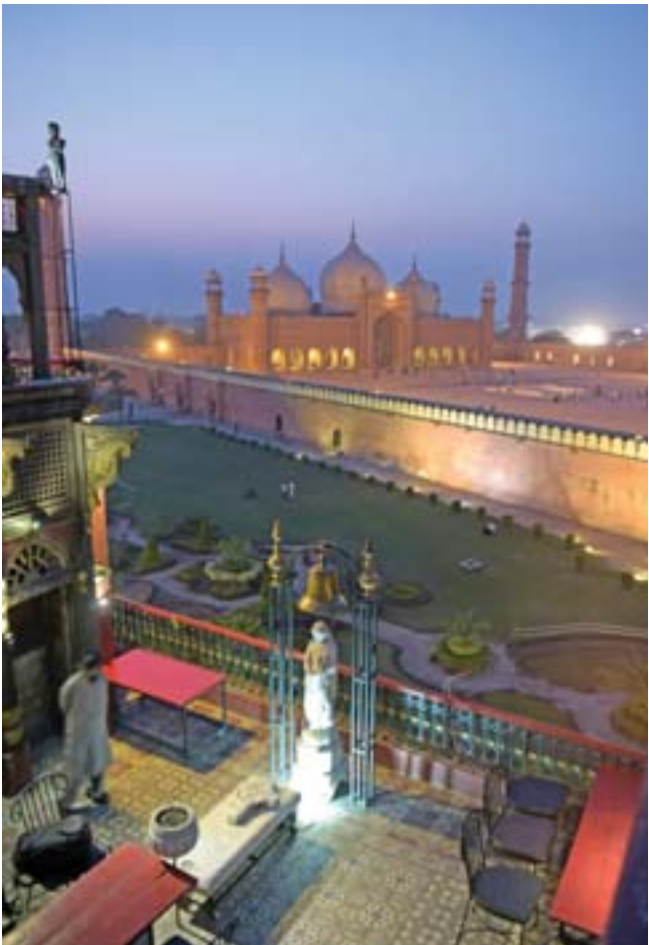


Guide Farhan Bell (left) talks to tourists on a colorful double decker bus during a ride in Pakistan's historic and cultural city of Lahore.

Similar work by the WCLA has already been done to revamp the artwork at the historic Wazir Khan mosque and the Shahi Hammam—one of the only surviving Turkish Baths in the subcontinent that is approximately 400 years old. The city's famed Delhi Gate, which once hosted extravagant Mughal processions arriving in Lahore from the east, has also been fully restored along with dozens of homes in the Walled City. Many of those involved in the project are optimistic. “The cities which are most famous for tourism, you can take London, Madrid, Istanbul, Rome, all the prerequisites which are available in those cities, are available in La-



This photograph shows the historic Mughal-era Lahore Fort in the Pakistani city of Lahore.



Tourists visit historic Badshahi Mosque in Lahore.



hore,” claims Ahmer Malik, head of Punjab’s tourism corporation, referring to Lahore’s architectural and cultural attractions.

But not all are convinced. Kamil Khan Mumtaz, President of Lahore Conservation Society (LCS), an advocacy organization promoting preservation projects, says the efforts run the risk of transforming the old city into a “Disneyland” to attract tourists. “This was a pedestrian’s city. A pre-Industrial revolution modeled city. This should be conserved into that original state instead of remodeling buildings,” said Mumtaz, who is pushing for the use of traditional construction materials in restoration projects. The calls runs into fresh conflict with infrastructure plans aimed at easing the city’s traffic congestion as Lahore adds high-rise buildings, malls, flyovers and amusement parks to its cityscape.

Lahore was the first Pakistani city to unveil a metro bus service, and is now constructing an inaugural metro train that Mumtaz and fellow civil society groups say will diminish the architectural history. The city also faces fresh challenges as it opens up to tourism. Canadian visitor Usama Bilal complains: “There are gorgeous old colonial buildings, British era buildings but they are not well taken care of. There is no infrastructure built for tourists.” — AFP



Tourists prepare to board a colorful double decker bus before start their journey in Pakistan’s historic and cultural city of Lahore.



Tourists watch colorful dance fountain at the greater Iqbal Park in the Pakistan’s historic and cultural city of Lahore.



Tourists visit the colorful “food street” in the Pakistan’s historic and cultural city of Lahore.

Indian food:

WHY IS IT SO INCREDIBLY GOOD?

By Daniel Neman

Everything you need to know about Indian food can be found in a single phrase in a cookbook by the otherwise reasonable Anupy Singla. The book “Indian for Everyone” contains a recipe for Chana Aloo, a meal of curried chickpeas and potatoes. Calling the dish comforting and wholesome, she adds that it is - and this is the important phrase - “an easy dinner option.”

The recipe for Chana Aloo contains 19 ingredients, and two of these are complicated spice mixes that she suggests you make yourself. One of the spice mixes is created from six ingredients, the other from 17 ingredients. That, to an Indian cook, is an easy dinner option. On the other hand, and this cannot be stressed enough, it is this multiplicity of ingredients and the painstaking process of putting them together that makes Indian food so sublime. The dishes are built from layers upon layers of flavors, combining in an unworldly melange of complex tastes. In other words, Indian food is worth the effort. Oh, how it is worth it.

Awash in spice

India, a vast and multifaceted nation with 22 official languages and nine recognized religions, is home to more than 17 percent of the world’s total population. What that means in culinary terms is that the country is not defined by one single style of cooking. The residents of Hyderabad, in the south, are known for their biryani - rice dishes topped with shredded meats. Punjab, in the north, is where tandoori cooking comes from, with the food cooked in hot clay ovens. Goa, on the west coast, specializes in fish and is influenced by the cuisine of Portugal, which once colonized it. Food in Bengal, in the east, is often cooked in mustard oil and is noted for the subtlety of its flavors.

The one thing that remains constant across the entire country is spice. Sometimes the food is hot, sometimes it is hotter and sometimes it is not hot at all, but it is always cooked with plenty of spices. The country is awash in spice, from the pungent, bright yellow turmeric to the bitter licorice taste of fennel seed, from the heady and aromatic nutmeg to the sharp warmth of ginger.

It is the way these spices are chosen and blended together that gives Indian food its highly developed, refined sensibility. You could spend a lifetime studying Indian food and still not learn half of what there is to know about the subject. I decided to make four dishes and call it a day.

Lamb in an Almond Sauce is a perfect example of the layered flavors found in Indian cooking. You begin by toasting the spices, which intensifies their piquancy while imparting to them a faint nuttiness. Then you make a paste of aromatics - garlic, ginger and turmeric, blended with water. After searing cubes of meat, you caramelize onions in the same pan. Then you add the blended aromatics and the toasted spices, followed by a bit of yogurt to tone down the flavor’s flamboyance. Tomato sauce is next, adding yet another type of character. It’s as impressive as anything you’d find at an Indian restaurant.



The joy of *Indian cooking*

The next dish was similar in tone, but utterly different - which is the joy of Indian cooking. As with the lamb dish, Chicken With Dried Fruit is a stew (technically, it's a braise) cooked with an abundance of spice. Actually, many of the spices are even the same. But the amounts that are used, and the way they are prepared, results in a manifestly different experience. This dish takes its cues from its use of yogurt and cilantro, which form the structure on which the other ingredients are hung. The other spices, though notable, take a culinary back seat. If there is a problem with Chicken With Dried Fruit, it is that it is ridiculously oily. I skimmed off nearly all of the oil, even though it was highly flavored, just for the sake of health. It didn't seem to detract from the dish at all.

Many Indian foods use a lot of oil, but the next one I made, Shrimp Curry, is made with no oil at all. This is a simple dish, and the quickest of all the ones I made, but its flavor is no less robust. The secret is a selection of spices that are simmered together with water until they are a bit concentrated, and then they are cooled down with coconut milk (I said it is made without oil; I did not say it is made without fat). A bit of tamarind paste would give it a sweet and tangy bite, but I didn't use tamarind paste because I wanted to make dishes using nothing

but ingredients you can find at a reasonably well-stocked grocery store. In place of the tamarind paste, I added honey and lemon. It's not as good or as fruity as the tamarind would be, but once the shrimp start simmering in the curry, you just know that it is going to be spectacular.

Last, I made a side dish that is an excellent way to recuperate while eating a spicy entree. Raita is a dish of yogurt that has been mixed with tomatoes, cucumbers, lemon juice and the like. In the variation I made, Roasted Eggplant Raita, the most notable flavor comes from roasted eggplant. But there is more to it than that, of course. The raita is boosted with cumin, scallions, ginger, ground coriander, cilantro and even, if you want it, a jalapeño. As with all Indian food, it is a perfect mixture of spices. One taste, and you're going to want to finish the entire bowl.

Recipes are adapted from "Madhur Jaffrey's Spice Kitchen," by Madhur Jaffrey.

LAMB IN ALMOND SAUCE

Ingredients

8 whole cloves
1 to 2 dried hot red chilies
1/2 teaspoon black peppercorns
8 cardamom pods
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
1 tablespoon unsweetened, dried, shredded coconut
3 tablespoons coarsely chopped blanched almonds
1 1/2 tablespoons coriander seeds (1 tablespoon plus 1/2 teaspoon ground)
1/3 nutmeg (scant 1 teaspoon ground)
1 (1/2-inch) piece of mace (1/2 teaspoon ground)
6 garlic cloves, peeled and coarsely chopped
1 (1-inch) cube fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
6 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 pounds boneless meat from shoulder of lamb, cut into 1-inch cubes, see note
2 medium onions, peeled and finely minced
3 tablespoons plain yogurt
1/2 cup canned tomato sauce
1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Preparation

Combine the cloves, chilies, peppercorns, cardamom pods, cumin seeds, coconut, almonds, coriander seeds, nutmeg and mace in a heavy skillet over medium heat (if using ground coriander, nutmeg or mace, leave those spices out). Stir until all the spices are lightly toasted, about 5 minutes (at this point, add the ground coriander, nutmeg or mace and stir for a few more seconds). Let spices cool a bit in a separate bowl, then grind finely in a spice grinder, blender or with a mortar and pestle. Set aside.

Put the garlic, ginger, turmeric and 1/2 cup water into a blender and blend until smooth. Heat the oil in a wide, heavy pot over fairly high heat. When hot, put in 7 or 8 pieces of meat at a time to brown. When each batch is brown on all sides, remove with a slotted spoon and place in a bowl. Continue to brown all the meat this way and set aside. Put the onions into the same pot and cook over high heat, stirring and scraping up the juices for about 5 minutes, or until they turn dark in spots. Then lower the heat to medium and add the paste from the blender, as well as the ground spices. Stir-fry for 5 minutes, gradually adding the yogurt as you do so, 1 tablespoon at a time. Add the tomato sauce and 1/2 cup water. Bring to a boil. Cover, lower heat and simmer gently for 15 minutes. Add the meat and all accumulated juices to the sauce. Add the salt and stir. Bring to a boil, cover, lower heat and simmer gently for 1 hour. Stir a few times as it cooks. Makes 4 to 6 servings.





Chicken With Dried Fruit

Ingredients

1 cup plain yogurt
 1 teaspoon salt, divided
 Black pepper
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1 teaspoon ground coriander
 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper, or to taste
 4 tablespoons minced cilantro
 3 1/2 pounds chicken pieces (preferably thighs, but all parts will do)
 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
 8 cardamom pods
 6 whole cloves
 1 (2-inch) cinnamon stick
 3 bay leaves
 2 1/2 tablespoons blanched slivered almonds
 2 1/2 tablespoons golden raisins

Preparation

Put the yogurt in a bowl and beat it lightly until smooth and creamy. Add 1/2 teaspoon of the salt, some black pepper, the cumin, coriander, cayenne and cilantro. Mix and set aside. Season the chicken pieces on both sides with salt and pepper, using the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt.

Heat the oil in a wide, preferably nonstick pan over medium-high heat. When hot, add the cardamom, cloves, cinnamon and bay leaves. Stir once and add as many chicken pieces as the pan will hold easily in a single layer. Brown the chicken on both sides and set aside in a large bowl. Brown all the chicken this way and remove to the bowl.

Into the same hot oil, add the almonds and raisins. Stir quickly. The almonds should turn golden, and the raisins should plump up - this should happen very fast. Put the chicken and its accumulated juices back into the pan. Add the seasoned yogurt. Stir to mix and bring to a simmer. Cover, turn heat to low, and simmer gently for 20 minutes (longer if the pieces of chicken are large), stirring once or twice. Remove cover, turn the heat up a bit, and reduce the sauce until it is thick and just clings to the chicken pieces, turning the chicken pieces over gently as you do so. Remove large whole spices before serving with rice. Makes 4 servings.

Indian Shrimp Curry

Ingredients

1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 tablespoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed to a pulp
1-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled and grated to a pulp
2 tablespoons coriander seeds (or 1 1/2 tablespoons ground)
1 teaspoon cumin seeds or ground cumin
1 (14-ounce) can coconut milk, well stirred
3/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
1 tablespoon tamarind paste (or 2 tablespoons honey plus 2 tablespoons lemon juice)
1 pound peeled and deveined, medium-sized uncooked shrimp

Preparation

In a bowl, combine 1 1/4 cups water with the cayenne pepper, paprika, turmeric, garlic and ginger. Mix well. Grind the coriander seeds and cumin seeds in a spice grinder and add to mixture, or add ground coriander and cumin. Place the spice mixture into a pan and bring to a simmer. Turn the heat to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes. Add the coconut milk, salt, tamarind paste (or honey and lemon juice) and bring to a simmer. Add the shrimp and simmer, stirring occasionally, until they turn opaque and are just cooked through. Makes 4 servings.



Roasted Eggplant Raita

Ingredients

- 1 large (1-pound) eggplant, skin on
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds or ground cumin
- 1 1/2 cups plain yogurt (not nonfat or low-fat)
- 1/4 cup finely chopped green onions, white and tender green parts only
- 1/2 teaspoon finely chopped ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon finely chopped jalapeno pepper, optional
- 1/2 cup chopped cilantro or 1 teaspoon dried mint

Preparation

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Pierce eggplant all over with a knife or fork. Place eggplant on prepared baking sheet

and bake 45 minutes or until eggplant is shriveled and appears to be very mushy. Remove from oven and allow to cool 10 minutes.

Peel eggplant with your fingers and discard peel and stem. Place eggplant in a large bowl and mash flesh with a large fork or potato masher, or finely chop with a knife. Place cumin seeds, if using, in a small frying pan on high heat. Using a wooden spoon, stir cumin for 1 to 2 minutes, or until dark brown. Immediately add seeds to eggplant. If using ground cumin, add to eggplant without toasting first. Add yogurt, green onions, ginger, coriander, salt, jalapeno, if using, and cilantro or mint. Stir with a spoon, cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 2 to 3 days (in an airtight container) before serving. Makes 4 servings.



Comic

Word Search

Old West 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid.
The remaining 30 letters spell a Will Rogers quotation.

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

ASSAY OFFICE DOCTOR MINE SHAFT SCOUTS
BANK ROBBER DRESSMAKER OUTLAWS SHOOTOUT
BARN FENCE PELTS SHOTGUN
BLACKSMITH GENERAL STORE PIGS SPURS
BOOTS GOLD NUGGET PIONEERS STIRRUP
BUCKBOARD GUNSLINGER POST OFFICE TOWN HALL
BUNKHOUSE HATS RANCH HAND TRADING POST
CALAMITY JANE HRED HAND REVOLVER TUMBLEWEED
CHAPS HORSES RUSTLER WAGON
COAL OIL ICE HOUSE WANTED POSTER
COWPOKE LASSO SALOON GIRL WHISKY
DAVY CROCKETT MARSHALL SCHOOLHOUSE WILD BILL HICKOK

Yesterday's Solution

Old West 1

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

BANKER FARRIER LAWMAN SALOON
BARKEEP FORT LIVESTOCK SHERIFF
BILLY THE KID FURS MINER SHOPKEEPER
BOOT HILL GOLD MINE OUTLAW GANG SITTING BULL
BRAND GOLD PANNING PISTOL STAGECOACH
CAMPFIRE GRAZE PLOW HORSE TELEGRAPH
CATTLE DRIVE HIRED GUN POSSE TRACKER
CHAPARRAL HOGS RAILROAD TRAIL
COAL HOMESTEAD RANCH TRAIN
CORRAL HOTEL RATTLESNAKE UNDERTAKER
COWBOY JUDGE RIFLE WATER TANK
DOC HOLLIDAY LARIAT SADDLE WELL

The hidden message is: A GOOD HORSE MAKES SHORT MILES

CROSSWORD 1847



ACROSS

1. Projectiles to be fired from a gun.
5. Shrubby plant with aromatic grayish-green leaves used as a cooking herb.
11. Cry plaintively.
15. A sudden short attack.
16. A port city in southwestern Iran.
17. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
18. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
20. A long thin fluffy scarf of feathers or fur.
21. The quarter of many North African cities in which the citadel is located.
23. Not to be placated or appeased or moved by entreaty.
25. Large bamboo having thick-walled culms.
26. American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
28. A special loved one.
30. The twelfth month of the civil year.
33. The eleventh month of the civil year.
34. Muslims collectively and their civilization.
37. An oil port in southern Iraq.
39. Show a response or a reaction to something.
41. Any of various small to minute sucking insects with narrow feathery wings if any.
45. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
46. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
48. (anatomy) Any encircling or beltlike structure.
49. part of the peritoneum attached to the

- stomach and to the colon and covering the intestines.
50. Submerged freshwater perennials.
53. A jail (literally, a French jail).
55. Characterized by action or forcefulness or force of personality.
57. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
58. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
59. A hollow device made of metal that makes a ringing sound when struck.
60. Indian statesman and leader with Gandhi in the struggle for home rule.
62. (zoology) Of or relating to fish of the family Carangidae n.
66. (anatomy) Of or relating to a cavity or chamber in the body (especially one of the upper chambers of the heart).
70. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
71. Of or relating to or characteristic of Denmark or the Danes.
74. Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
75. 3 to 30 gigahertz.
76. (especially of plants) Developed without chlorophyll by being deprived of light.
78. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
79. Take in solid food.
80. Worn and broken down by hard use.
81. Used of a single unit or thing.

DOWN

1. Any of various strong liquors distilled

- from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
2. The arch of bone beneath the eye that forms the prominence of the cheek.
3. An unwholesome atmosphere.
4. A doctor's degree in optometry.
5. Italian painter whose many paintings exemplify the ideals of the High Renaissance (1483-1520).
6. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
7. A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
8. A European river.
9. Of or relating to or near the nares.
10. Of the appetites and passions of the body.
11. A bachelor's degree in religion.
12. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
13. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
14. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
19. Someone who obtains pleasure from inflicting pain or others.
22. Of or relating to or containing barium.
24. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria and closely related to Hausa.
27. An unforeseen obstacle.
29. In equal amounts or shares.
31. The outer and thinner of the two bones of the human leg between the knee and ankle.
32. A fighter who batters the opponent.
35. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
36. One million periods per second.
38. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
40. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.

42. Small Old World songbird with a reddish breast.
43. Complacently or inanely foolish.
44. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
47. A gate at the rear of a vehicle.
51. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
52. Improved or corrected by critical editing.
54. Small tart usually used as a canape.
56. A medical establishment run by a group of medical specialists.
61. The address of a web page on the world wide web.
63. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
64. A flat float (usually made of logs or planks) that can be used for transport or as a platform for swimmers.
65. French couturier whose first collection in 1947 created a style (tight bodice and narrow waist and flowing pleated skirt) that became known as the New Look (1905-1957).
67. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
68. A primeval personification of air and breath.
69. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
72. An inflammatory disease of connective tissue with variable features including fever and weakness and fatigability and joint pains and skin lesions on the face or neck or arms.
73. An accidental happening.
77. A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



00:05 We Still Kill The Old Way
01:50 Project Almanac
03:45 X-Men: Apocalypse
06:20 Inception
08:50 A Good Day To Die Hard
10:30 Project Almanac
12:20 Independents' Day
14:00 Inception
16:30 Boerning II
18:15 The Patriot
21:00 Stratton
22:40 Mechanic: Resurrection
00:40 Abducted



0:25 The House Sitter
02:00 Metro
03:35 Sacrifice
05:15 Escape
06:50 Metro
08:25 Sacrifice
10:05 Escape
11:40 The House Sitter
13:10 The Tower
15:15 The Call Up
16:50 Poltergeist
18:30 The Hollow Point
20:15 The Game
22:30 Sea Of Love
sor Branestawn



01:25 Morgan
03:05 McLaren
04:45 The Mummy
06:45 Tommy's Honor
08:50 McLaren
10:30 Disneynature: Born In China
12:00 The Mummy
13:55 Max 2: White House Hero
15:30 Trolls
17:10 A Monster Calls
19:05 Deepwater Horizon
21:00 Home Again
22:45 Green Room



01:15 Lies & Alibis
02:50 Sam
04:40 The Family Fang
06:30 Boris And Natasha: The Movie
08:00 The Borrowers
09:35 The Family Fang
11:30 Breaking The Bank
13:25 Boris And Natasha: The Movie
15:00 Ghost Town
16:50 Aquamarine
18:35 Daddy's Home
20:15 The Hot Chick
22:05 Deuce Bigalow: European Gig-
olo
23:30 The Bronze

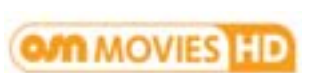


01:00 Amores Perros
03:45 Akeelah And The Bee
05:45 Worlds Apart
08:10 Lawrence Of Arabia
11:36 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
14:01 Yosemite
15:45 Waiting For Superman
17:50 The Dressmaker
19:50 To Kill A Mockingbird
22:05 The Kite Runner



00:00 Elias And The Royal Yacht
01:30 A.R.C.H.I.E.
03:05 Felix All Around The World
04:40 Nur And The Dragon's Temple
06:00 Last Wizard

07:30 Quest For A Heart
09:00 Ploddy Police Car
10:25 Beyond Beyond
11:55 Mia And The Migoo
13:35 A.R.C.H.I.E.
15:10 Felix All Around The World
16:45 Free Birds
18:10 Beyond Beyond
19:40 Micropolis
21:15 Moomins And The Comet
Chase
22:45 Free Birds
14:20 Ethel & Ernest
16:00 Swan Princess: Royally Under-
cover
17:25 Two Buddies And A Badger
18:50 Ivan The Incredible
20:20 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's
Quest
22:05 Swan Princess: Royally Under-
cover
23:30 Funny Little Cars



00:45 Freedom Writers
02:50 Ice Age: Collision Course
04:35 My All American
06:45 Ghostbusters
08:50 Suicide Squad
10:55 Avatar
13:35 A.I. Artificial Intelligence
16:05 Sneakers
18:10 Fantastic Four
20:00 Birdman
22:05 The Revenant



00:30 Jackass: The Movie
01:55 Prophecy V: Forsaken
03:10 Hollywood On Set
03:35 Hollywood On Set
04:00 Hollywood On Set
04:25 Hollywood On Set
04:55 Hollywood On Set
05:20 Hollywood On Set
05:50 Hollywood On Set
06:15 Hollywood On Set
06:45 Hollywood On Set
07:20 Aaliyah: The Princess Of R&B
08:50 Deadly Secrets By The Lake
10:20 She's All That
11:55 Days Of Our Lives S12
12:32 Days Of Our Lives S12
13:09 Days Of Our Lives S12
13:46 Days Of Our Lives S12
14:23 Days Of Our Lives S12
15:00 He Said, She Said
16:55 First Knight
19:05 Bounce
20:52 Hellraisers Of The Fall
23:00 Hellraiser VI: Hellseeker
00:00 Committed



01:30 Employee Of The Month
03:00 Hostage
05:00 Heartlands
06:30 Bad Santa
08:00 The Good Dinosaur
09:45 Heshner
11:30 The Blair Witch Project
13:00 On The Road
15:00 Employee Of The Month
16:30 Nine
18:30 Committed
20:00 Cinderella
21:45 Jindabyne
23:45 Kinky Boots



00:00 Hap And Leonard: Mucho
Mojo
01:00 Promises & Lies: The Story Of
UB40
02:00 Janet King
03:00 Hap And Leonard: Mucho
Mojo
04:00 Hap And Leonard: Mucho
Mojo

05:00 Life Itself
07:00 23 Kilometres
08:25 Iris
09:45 Miss Firecracker
11:30 Back To Your Arms
13:05 Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me
15:00 Cameraman: Life/Works Of
Jack Cardiff
16:30 23 Kilometres
17:55 Iris
19:15 Miss Firecracker
21:00 Close Up With THR
22:00 The Cooler
23:40 The Player



00:15 The Drew Carey Show
00:40 The Drew Carey Show
01:05 Seinfeld
01:30 Seinfeld
01:55 Mr. Sunshine
02:20 Malcolm In The Middle
02:45 Powerless
03:10 Late Night With Seth Meyers
04:00 The Tonight Show Starring
Jimmy Fallon
04:50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
05:40 Malcolm In The Middle
06:05 Mr. Sunshine
06:30 Powerless
06:55 Angie Tribeca
07:20 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:10 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 The Tonight Show Starring
Jimmy Fallon
09:50 The Simpsons
10:15 The Last Man On Earth
10:40 Malcolm In The Middle
11:05 Mr. Sunshine
11:30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:20 Powerless
12:45 Angie Tribeca
13:10 The Drew Carey Show
13:35 The Drew Carey Show
14:00 Seinfeld
14:25 Seinfeld
14:50 Malcolm In The Middle
15:15 The Simpsons
15:40 The Last Man On Earth
16:05 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
17:00 Powerless
17:30 Angie Tribeca
18:00 The Drew Carey Show
18:30 The Drew Carey Show
19:00 Seinfeld
19:30 Seinfeld
20:00 Grown-Ish
20:30 Fresh Off The Boat
21:00 The Tonight Show Starring
Jimmy Fallon
22:00 You're The Worst
22:30 Diffcult People
23:00 The Detour
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:40 Lethal Weapon
01:30 S.W.A.T.
02:20 Outlander
03:20 The Unit
04:10 Time After Time
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 The View
08:00 S.W.A.T.
09:00 The Unit
10:00 Time After Time
11:00 APB
12:00 Lethal Weapon
13:00 The View
14:00 Time After Time
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Unit
18:00 APB
19:00 Survivor: Ghost Island
21:00 Once Upon A Time
22:00 This Is Us
23:00 APB
23:50 Empire



00:05 Quarry
01:00 Spawn

01:30 Spawn
02:00 American Crime Story: The As-
sassination Of Versace
03:00 The Chi
04:00 Katt Williams: Priceless: After-
life
05:05 12th & Delaware
06:30 The Tears Of Sichuan Province
07:15 El Diablo
09:10 61*
11:20 Grey Gardens
13:10 Frequently Asked Questions
About Time Travel
14:45 An American Girl: Chrissa
Stands Strong
16:20 Einstein And Eddington
18:00 Shots Fired
18:50 Herblock: The Black & The
White
20:25 Top Ten Monks
21:00 House Of Cards
22:00 Homeland
23:00 Whitney Cummings: I'm Your
Girlfriend



00:00 Outlander
01:00 APB
01:50 Empire
02:40 Lethal Weapon
03:30 S.W.A.T.
04:20 Outlander
05:20 The Unit
06:10 Time After Time
07:00 Good Morning America
09:00 The View
10:00 S.W.A.T.
11:00 The Unit
12:00 Time After Time
13:00 APB
14:00 Lethal Weapon
15:00 The View
16:00 Time After Time
17:00 Live Good Morning America
19:00 The Unit
20:00 APB
21:00 Survivor: Ghost Island
23:00 WWE Experience



00:35 13/13/13
02:10 Channel Zero: No-End House
02:55 Channel Zero: No-End House
03:40 Night Of The Witch
05:15 Killjoys
06:00 Stargate SG-1
06:50 Stargate SG-1
07:40 Stargate SG-1
08:30 Stargate SG-1
09:20 Stargate SG-1
10:10 Stargate SG-1
11:00 Smallville
11:50 Smallville
12:40 Smallville
13:30 Smallville
14:20 Smallville
15:10 Pokemon IV: 4ever
16:40 Pokemon Heroes
18:05 Saga: Curse Of The Shadow
20:10 Face Off
21:00 Scott Pilgrim vs. The World
23:00 Hellboy II: The Golden Army



00:00 Mistresses
01:00 Mistresses
02:00 Grey's Anatomy
03:00 Married At First Sight
04:00 Cougar Town
04:30 Cougar Town
05:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
05:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
06:00 Mistresses
07:00 Mistresses
08:00 Grey's Anatomy
09:00 Married At First Sight
10:00 Cougar Town
10:30 Cougar Town
11:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
11:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
12:00 Mistresses

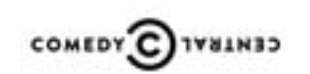
13:00 Mistresses
14:00 Grey's Anatomy
15:00 Devious Maids
16:00 Cougar Town
16:30 Cougar Town
17:00 Cedar Cove
18:00 Devious Maids
19:00 Devious Maids
20:00 Project Runway All Stars
22:00 Fashion Star
23:00 Making Mr. Right



0:20 Say Yes To The Dress
01:05 90 Days To Wed
01:50 90 Days To Wed: Before The 90
Days
02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
03:20 Sister Wives
04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras: Coach Wars
04:50 Separated At Birth
05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
06:00 Sister Wives
06:45 Sister Wives
07:30 Big & Little
08:15 Say Yes To The Dress
09:00 Cake Boss
09:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
09:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:32 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:55 Say Yes To The Dress UK
11:17 Say Yes To The Dress UK
11:40 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:02 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
13:10 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
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 This Is Life With Carissa Cupido
17:50 Cake Boss
18:20 Cake Boss
18:50 Kate Plus 8
19:40 Cake Boss
20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
21:00 Kate Plus 8
21:50 Little People, Big World
23:30 Return To Amish



00:45 The Coroner
01:40 Holby City
02:35 Doctors
03:10 EastEnders
03:40 EastEnders
04:10 Benidorm
05:05 Doctor Who
06:00 Doctors
06:30 Casualty
07:25 Holby City
08:20 Doctor Who
09:10 Doctors
09:40 Doctors
10:10 EastEnders
10:40 The Coroner
11:25 Casualty
12:20 Holby City
13:15 Doctor Who
14:05 EastEnders
14:35 EastEnders
15:05 Casualty
16:00 Doctors
16:30 Doctors
17:00 Doctors
17:30 Doctors
18:00 Doctors
18:35 Friday Night Dinner
19:05 The Coroner
19:55 Father Brown
20:50 Death In Paradise
21:50 Poldark
22:50 Doctors
23:20 Friday Night Dinner
23:45 Agatha Raisin



00:05 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
00:30 Chris Ramsey Stand Up Cen-
tral
00:55 Tosh.0
01:20 Tosh.0
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan
Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor
Noah
03:23 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan
Klepper
04:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
04:40 Workaholics
05:05 Workaholics
05:30 Workaholics
05:55 Workaholics
06:20 Workaholics
06:50 The Jim Gaffigan Show
07:15 The Jim Gaffigan Show
07:40 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:05 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:30 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:55 The Dude Perfect Show
09:20 The Dude Perfect Show
09:45 Brotherhood
10:10 Brotherhood
10:35 Brotherhood
11:00 Kroll Show
11:25 Kroll Show
11:50 Kroll Show
12:15 Kroll Show
12:40 Kroll Show
13:05 Disaster Date
13:30 Disaster Date
13:55 Lip Sync Battle UK
14:20 Lip Sync Battle UK
14:45 Ridiculousness Arabia
15:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
15:35 Brotherhood
16:00 Brotherhood
16:30 Lip Sync Battle
16:55 Lip Sync Battle
17:20 Disaster Date
17:45 Friends
18:08 Friends
18:31 Friends
18:54 Friends
19:17 Friends
19:40 Workaholics
20:05 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
20:35 Ridiculousness Arabia
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor
Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan
Klepper
22:00 Nate Bargatze: Full Time Magic
22:45 Comedy Central Presents
Comedy 3alwagef
23:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor
Noah



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
03:25 It's Not Rocket Science
04:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 The Chase
07:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
08:05 Cannonball
09:00 The Jonathan Ross Show
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
11:00 The Chase
11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 The Chase
15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street

TV Listings

20:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Treehouse Masters
02:40 Bad Dog
03:35 Orangutan Island
04:00 Orangutan Island
04:25 Whale Wars
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
06:49 Untamed & Uncut
07:36 Meet The Penguins
08:00 Meet The Penguins
08:25 Orangutan Island
08:50 Orangutan Island
09:15 Treehouse Masters
10:10 Bad Dog
11:05 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
12:00 Orangutan Island
12:28 Orangutan Island
12:55 Whale Wars
13:50 North Woods Law
14:45 Bad Dog
15:40 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory

16:35 Untamed & Uncut
17:30 Treehouse Masters
18:25 The Bronx Zoo
19:20 Missouri Mountain Family
20:15 Bad Dog
21:10 Orangutan Island
21:38 Orangutan Island
22:05 The Bronx Zoo
23:00 Missouri Mountain Family
23:55 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory



00:00 The First 48
01:00 The First 48
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
03:00 Fred Dineage: Murder Casebook
04:00 The First 48
05:00 The First 48
06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
07:00 Cold Case Files
08:00 The First 48
09:00 It Takes A Killer
09:30 It Takes A Killer
10:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:00 The First 48
14:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
15:00 Homicide Hunter
16:00 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Cold Case Files
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 It Takes A Killer
19:30 It Takes A Killer
20:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
23:00 Crazy Love



00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
01:20 Strip The Cosmos
02:10 Man v The Universe
03:00 Everest: Beyond The Limit
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
05:55 How It's Made
06:20 Destroyed In Seconds
06:40 Destroyed In Seconds
07:00 Ultimate Survival
07:50 How It's Made
08:15 How It's Made
08:40 Destroyed In Seconds
09:05 Destroyed In Seconds

09:30 Tanked
10:20 Everest: Beyond The Limit
11:10 Don't Blink
11:35 Don't Blink
12:00 Deception With Keith Barry
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Destroyed In Seconds
14:05 Destroyed In Seconds
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 Everest: Beyond The Limit
17:00 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
17:25 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
17:50 Deception With Keith Barry
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
21:35 Guinness World Records
Smashed New Zealand
22:00 Deception With Keith Barry
22:50 Everest: Beyond The Limit
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:50 Killing Field: People Magazine Investigates
01:45 Evil Lives Here
02:40 The Perfect Suspect
03:35 Murder Book
04:30 Killing Field: People Magazine Investigates
05:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
06:20 I Almost Got Away With It
07:10 Evil Online
08:00 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
08:25 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
09:15 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
09:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
10:10 Evil Online
11:05 Betrayed
12:00 Married With Secrets
12:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Evil Online
15:40 Betrayed
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
18:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
18:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Evil Online
21:10 Betrayed
22:05 Grave Secrets
23:00 Too Pretty To Live
23:55 Forbidden: Dying For Love



00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Kings Of The Wild
01:50 Bear Grylls: Breaking Point
02:35 Man v Expert
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Flying Wild Alaska
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Backyard Oil
06:23 Backyard Oil
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Flying Wild Alaska
08:20 Backyard Oil
08:45 Backyard Oil
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Flying Wild Alaska
10:45 Dirty Jobs
11:30 Alaskan Bush People
12:20 Backyard Oil
12:43 Backyard Oil
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Dirty Jobs

14:40 Alaskan Bush People
15:30 Kings Of The Wild
16:15 Bear Grylls: Breaking Point
17:05 Man v Expert
17:50 Impossible Engineering
18:40 Tesla's Death Ray: A Murder Declassified
19:25 Alaskan Bush People
20:15 Extreme Engineering
21:00 Street Justice: The Bronx
21:50 Gear Dogs
22:40 Jesse James Outlaw Garage
23:30 Gold Rush



00:00 Million Dollar Genius
01:00 Cities Of The Underworld
02:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
03:00 10 Things You Don't Know About...
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Clash Of The Gods
05:30 Million Dollar Genius
06:20 How 2 Win
07:10 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
08:00 Cities Of The Underworld
09:00 10 Things You Don't Know About...
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Clash Of The Gods
12:00 Million Dollar Genius
13:00 Cities Of The Underworld
14:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
15:00 10 Things You Don't Know About...
16:00 Ancient Aliens
17:00 Ancient Aliens
18:00 Ancient Aliens
19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
20:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
21:00 10 Things You Don't Know About...
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 What Really Happened



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 Counting Cars
02:25 Car Hunters
02:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
03:40 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
04:30 Swamp People
05:15 Swamp People
06:00 Duck Dynasty
11:50 Mountain Men
16:00 Ax Men
20:10 Mountain Men



00:45 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
01:10 Glamour Puds
01:40 Eat: The Story Of Food
02:35 Confucius Was A Foodie
03:30 Raw Travel
03:55 Raw Travel
04:25 Restoration Man
05:20 Carnival Eats
05:45 Carnival Eats
06:15 Fearless Chef
07:10 Eat: The Story Of Food
08:05 Confucius Was A Foodie
09:00 Raw Travel
09:25 Raw Travel
09:55 Restoration Man
10:50 Carnival Eats
11:15 Carnival Eats
11:45 Fearless Chef
12:40 Eat: The Story Of Food
13:35 Confucius Was A Foodie
14:30 Raw Travel
14:55 Raw Travel
15:25 Dog Whisperer
16:20 Dog Whisperer
17:15 Food School
17:40 Food School
18:10 Eat: The Story Of Food
19:05 Confucius Was A Foodie
20:00 Raw Travel

20:30 Raw Travel
21:00 Dog Whisperer
22:00 Dog Whisperer
22:55 Food School
23:20 Food School
23:50 Eat: The Story Of Food



00:10 Nazi Megastructures Compilations
01:00 Mega Factories
02:00 Chain Of Command
03:00 Science Of Stupid
03:30 Science Of Stupid
04:00 Nazi Megastructures Compilations
05:00 Going Deep With David Rees
05:30 Going Deep With David Rees
06:00 Mega Factories
07:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
08:00 The Witch Doctor Will See You Now
09:00 Going Deep With David Rees
09:30 Going Deep With David Rees
10:00 Counterterror Nyc: Special Forces
11:00 Killing Kennedy
13:00 Mega Factories
14:00 Woman Raised By Monkeys
15:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
16:00 Locked Up Abroad
17:00 Chain Of Command
18:00 Drugs Inc
19:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
20:00 Locked Up Abroad
20:50 Chain Of Command
21:40 Drugs Inc
22:30 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
23:20 Money Meltdown
23:45 Money Meltdown



00:20 Little Killers
01:10 Cougars: Ninja Of Jackson Hole
02:00 Cougars: Ninja Of Jackson Hole
02:50 World's Deadliest Killers
03:45 Wild 24
04:40 The Invaders
05:35 Cougars: Ninja Of Jackson Hole
06:30 World's Deadliest Killers
07:25 Wild 24
08:20 The Invaders
09:15 Viper Queens
10:10 Wild 24
11:05 Dino Bird
12:00 Shark Nicole
12:55 Monster Croc Hunt
13:50 World's Deadliest Killers
14:45 Wild 24
15:40 The Invaders
16:35 Snakes In The City
17:30 Wild Japan: Snow Monkeys
18:25 Giants Of The Deep Blue
19:20 Wild 24
20:10 The Invaders
21:00 Snakes In The City
21:50 Wild Japan: Snow Monkeys
22:40 Giants Of The Deep Blue
23:30 Shark Nicole



00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory
02:20 Man v Expert
03:10 The Strangest UFO Stories Of All Time
04:00 The Big Brain Theory
04:48 Mythbusters
05:36 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Food Factory
06:24 Man v Expert
07:12 The Strangest UFO Stories Of All Time

08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 The Big Brain Theory
09:14 Mythbusters
10:02 The Strangest UFO Stories Of All Time
10:50 How Do They Do It?
11:14 Food Factory
11:38 Man v Expert
12:26 The Big Brain Theory
13:14 Mythbusters
14:02 How Do They Do It?
14:26 Food Factory
14:50 The Strangest UFO Stories Of All Time
15:38 The Big Brain Theory
16:26 Man v Expert
17:14 Mythbusters
18:02 The Strangest UFO Stories Of All Time
18:50 The Big Brain Theory
19:40 Mythbusters
20:30 Hacking The Wild
21:20 How Do They Do It?
21:45 Food Factory
22:10 Futurescape With James Woods
23:00 Hacking The Wild
23:50 The Big Brain Theory



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

21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 K.C. Undercover
21:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:10 Bizaardvark
22:35 Girl Meets World
23:00 Star Wars Forces Of Destiny
23:05 Rolling With The Ronks
23:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:45 Lolirock



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 I Am Frankie
14:12 The Thundermans
14:36 Sanjay And Craig
15:00 The Boy Who Cried Werewolf
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Massive Monster Mayhem
17:24 I Am Frankie
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Danger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Harvey Beaks
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 Kid-E-Cats
00:22 Shimmer And Shine
00:44 Sunny Day
01:06 Max & Ruby
01:30 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:40 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
01:50 The Day Henry Met
01:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
02:42 Paw Patrol
02:54 Kid-E-Cats
02:58 Kid-E-Cats
03:04 Shimmer And Shine
03:26 Nella The Princess Knight
03:39 Paw Patrol
04:00 The Day Henry Met
04:06 Max & Ruby
04:29 Dora The Explorer
04:51 Sunny Day
05:13 Nella The Princess Knight
05:36 Shimmer And Shine
05:59 Wallykazam!
06:22 Zack & Quack
06:32 The Day Henry Met

Stars

Friday, March 2, 2018



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You're the master of witty repartee and the lively quip. If someone wants to get into a heavy issue, tell them that now is not the time -- you're too busy dropping bon mots left and right. It's not that you're dismissing their concerns, but that today your energies are best spent being the life of the party and a social butterfly. Your verbal skills are top notch, and you could charm just about anyone into just about, well, anything.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The stars are telling you to keep an eye out for riches where you least expect them, although not on a material level. People, too, can be hidden treasures, especially if you know how to look. Someone you know casually may be unexpectedly delightful if you remain open-minded and flexible. In fact, you may just end up developing a great and surprising friendship with someone that you thought was unlikely to ever be a part of your life.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

When it comes to generating mental energy, you're the go-to sign in the zodiac. It's time to take all that brain buzz and direct it toward an area that lets you explore your intellect and all its gifts. How long has it been since you've done something really stimulating? Why not sign up for a class, or start studying a favorite topic on your own? Why not teach yourself to play a musical instrument? Anything is possible if you engage your cranium.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You'll find yourself interested in what makes you tick, where you come from and how on earth you're able to pick up pencils with your toes. Sounds like now would be a good time to shake the family tree for some interesting anecdotes about your nearest and dearest. Not only will you learn tons of stories and tidbits about relatives both near and far, it'll give you much to think about regarding your past -- and your future.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

An extremely exciting turn of events could leave you breathless and torn between trepidation and wanting more. If you're bold and tackle these new challenges in front of you with the full force of your formidable enthusiasm, then your success is practically guaranteed. Be realistic when it comes to making long-term plans, however, and make sure you set short-term achievable goals to keep your interest level high.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Is waiting for an answer driving you out of your gourd? Heck, it could make anyone go nuts, especially for a person in your shoes. Go ahead and follow up as much as you can to try and elicit a response, but don't push it, especially with those sensitive types who might take your eagerness the wrong way. Remember that old saying about good things coming to those who wait? Chant it now to keep your cool.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Ever thought about picking up a new language? You don't have to master it right away -- even a few phrases or taking in a foreign flick might be enough for now. It'll spark the desire for something more travel-wise -- and a new connection could give you the perfect opportunity to practice it. With your stellar communication abilities, you'll be parlez vous-ing in whatever dialect you wish soon enough.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Do you mean what you say, or are you saying what you know is correct? The stars urge you to lighten up. That doesn't necessarily mean turning clownish or cracking jokes, but bringing issues to light that you, secretive type that you are, have been busily keeping tucked away in the innermost parts of your psyche. You'll be surprised at what happens once you expose those so-called secrets. You might just feel a whole lot better.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're such a smooth talker, but right now, there's a danger of letting your mouth run the situation without having the goods to back it up. Slow down and get your mental processes in hand before you do any more talking, and that way you won't have to placate any disgruntled types later who are looking for you to come through on those big promises you were making. It'll save you so much trouble in the long run.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Rather than taking the entire responsibility for something upon yourself, why not sit down and figure out a way to delegate? If necessary, you can stay at the head of the chain of command, but that's even more reason for you to hand off tasks to other people to make sure that things keep working at the most efficient rate possible. Sit down with a few trusted others and start working on ways to divvy up duties.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You're an expert at finding new ways to do the same old, same old, and that goes double when it comes to communicating with a romantic interest. The stars smile on any and all romantic types of interaction right now, so you're really in luck. Whether it's a long established cutie or a new kid on the block, you can find a way to get their attention without resorting to batting your eyelashes or bragging about your car.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

That Shakespeare had it right when he wrote, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophies.' Dreams, symbols and things that are more than meet the eye play a big part in your life right now. Pay attention to recurring themes, coincidences and people that keep crossing your path. There's a message hidden there among them, but you have to look way beyond the obvious.

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
Antiga	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	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

Antarctica: A laboratory for climate change

LE DU ROI-GEORGE, Antarctique: A decade ago, a thick layer of ice covered the Collins Glacier on Antarctica's King George Island. Now, the rocky landscape is visible to the naked eye, in a region that is both a victim of and a laboratory for climate change. "I had the opportunity to come here over a 15-year period, and even within a human's lifetime, you can already see the changes brought about by climate change," the director of the Chilean Antarctic Institute (INACH), Marcelo Leppe, told AFP.

Observers can now see "rocks that we weren't seeing five or 10 years ago, and that is direct evidence of the shrinking of these glaciers and loss of mass," he said. But even as these melting glaciers

worry the scientific world, the presence in Antarctica of plants proving resistant to extreme conditions has also sparked hope for a warming planet. Chile is one of some 20 countries with scientific bases on the cold continent. Its Professor Julio Escudero complex on King George Island is where dozens of researchers are measuring the effects of climate change on native flora and fauna. "We need to quantify the change to predict what could happen in the near future," Leppe said.

Blooming algae

Measurements taken last year by Chilean scientists on Doumer Island in Antarctica's Palmer Archipelago showed water temperature had risen to

2.5 degrees Celsius (36.5 degrees Fahrenheit), up from its normal range of between 0 and 1.5 degrees. And at a depth of 40 meters (130 feet), it was still at 2.0 degrees. The warming waters have attracted species previously unseen in the Antarctic, such as a spider crab normally found south of Chile.

There is also a blooming of green algae which is vital for the local ecosystem, especially for crustaceans. "Even though they're really small, the algae and the micro-algae are really important for balance in the food chain," said Nelson Valdivia, a professor at Austral University of Chile. "They supply nutrients to the rest of the ecosystem, and we know that the number of species in the same ecosystem is a very important

factor in terms of it remaining in good health." But over a longer term, this flourishing of algae could unsettle the ecological balance.

The worry is "losing species that we don't even yet know exist," Valdivia said. Scientists also fear the effect of warmer temperatures on the rest of the world. According to NASA monitoring, between 2002 and 2016, Antarctica lost 125 gigatonnes of ice per year, causing sea levels worldwide to rise by 0.35 millimeters annually. Antarctica holds 62 percent of the planet's freshwater reserves, so the melting there could have far-reaching consequences, not least by diminishing the salinity of the seas, which could prove fatal for many marine species. —AFP

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Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Friday 2/3/2018								Departure Flights on Friday 2/3/2018							
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	MSC	403	Asyut	13:00	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:10
				KAC <td>792<td>Madinah<td>13:20</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>QTR<td>1075<td>Doha</td><td>12:30</td></td></td></td></td>	792 <td>Madinah<td>13:20</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>QTR<td>1075<td>Doha</td><td>12:30</td></td></td></td>	Madinah <td>13:20</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>QTR<td>1075<td>Doha</td><td>12:30</td></td></td>	13:20					QTR <td>1075<td>Doha</td><td>12:30</td></td>	1075 <td>Doha</td> <td>12:30</td>	Doha	12:30
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:01	KAC <td>774</td> <td>Riyadh<td>13:40</td><td>KAC</td><td>285</td><td>Dhaka</td><td>00:01</td><td>WAN</td><td>835</td><td>Sarajevo</td><td>12:35</td></td>	774	Riyadh <td>13:40</td> <td>KAC</td> <td>285</td> <td>Dhaka</td> <td>00:01</td> <td>WAN</td> <td>835</td> <td>Sarajevo</td> <td>12:35</td>	13:40	KAC	285	Dhaka	00:01	WAN	835	Sarajevo	12:35
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	KAC <td>618</td> <td>Doha</td> <td>14:15</td> <td>JZR</td> <td>604</td> <td>Ahmedabad</td> <td>00:05</td> <td>MEA</td> <td>405</td> <td>Beirut</td> <td>12:55</td>	618	Doha	14:15	JZR	604	Ahmedabad	00:05	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:00
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	QTR	1078	Doha	14:20	MSC	406		00:30	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
PIA	205	Lahore	00:40	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30	JZR	176	Dubai	13:40
KAC	102	London	00:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35	MSC	404	Asyut	14:00
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	KAC	364	Colombo	14:40	MSC	502	Alexandria	01:00	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	14:55	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05	JZR	124	Bahrain	14:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	BBC	044	Dhaka	01:30	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:10	PIA	206	Lahore	01:40	KAC	691	Muscat	15:20
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	JZR	142	Doha	01:45	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:25
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	JZR	787	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	677	Dubai	01:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	502	Beirut	15:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	562	Amman	15:30	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	15:50
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:15	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	QTR	1072	Doha	15:55	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	118	New York	16:00	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
JZR	185	Dubai	02:40	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:00	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	535	Cairo	16:05	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40	KAC	513	Tehran	16:30
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	JZR	779	Jeddah	16:25	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	FDB	059	Dubai	16:40	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40
KAC	414	Bangkok	03:05	RJA	640	Amman	16:55	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:40
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	542	Cairo	17:05	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:00	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	QTR	1073	Doha	17:15
FEG	931	Alexandria	04:00	JZR	125	Bahrain	17:35	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
THY	6536	Istanbul	04:15	JZR	777	Jeddah	17:40	KAC	103	London	05:00	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	WAN	984	Tbilisi	17:50	FEG	954	Asyut	05:00	KAC	361	Colombo	17:45
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	FDB	063	Dubai	18:10	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:30	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	JZR	483	Istanbul	18:15	THY	6536	Dhaka/Istanbul	05:45	JZR	538	Cairo	18:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	JZR	177	Dubai	18:15	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	UAE	874	Dubai	06:15	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	QTR	1080	Doha	18:50	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25	JZR	184	Dubai	18:30
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	744	Dammam	19:10	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50	JZR	608	Hyderabad	18:40
JZR	267	Beirut	05:15	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:20	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55	WAN	115	Bahrain	18:50
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	RJA	643	Amman	07:05	KAC	381	Delhi	18:50
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	FDB	064	Dubai	19:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30	GEL	701	Baku	08:00	JZR	554	Alexandria	19:20
GEL	700	Baku	05:30	WAN	356	Luxor	19:35	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:55	KAC	165	Rome	08:15	QTR	1081	Doha	20:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	ICV	675	Luxembourg	20:00	KAC	161	Geneva	08:20	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	678	Dubai	06:25	KAC	104	London	20:00	KAC	791	Madinah	08:35	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	KAC	166	Rome	20:10	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	KAC	620	Doha	20:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
BAW	157	London	07:10	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	BAW	156	London	08:55	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:50
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	SVA	500	Jeddah	20:35	KAC	613	Bahrain	08:55	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	692	Muscat	20:40	KAC	117	New York	09:00	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45	KAC	534	Cairo	09:10	KAC	1543	Cairo	21:20
KAC	358	Kochi	07:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:45	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	ICV	675	Hong Kong	21:30
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	514	Tehran	21:00	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45	DLH	624	Bahrain	21:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	162	Geneva	21:20	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00	SVA	501	Jeddah	21:55
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	JZR	482	Istanbul	10:05	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	KAC	411	Bangkok	22:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	KAC	786	Jeddah	21:25	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:30	KAC	617	Doha	10:15	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
IRA	675	Lar	10:00	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20	KAC	203	Lahore	22:10
WAN	342	Sohag	10:15	KAC	676	Dubai	21:40	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	10:30	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	WAN	116	Bahrain	22:00	KAC	778	Jeddah	10:40	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:35
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KAC	564	Amman	22:05	ZAV	4101	IQA	11:00	KAC	383	Delhi	22:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	IRA	674	Lar	11:00	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	KAC	101	London	11:05	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25	MSC	416	Sohag	11:15	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	SVA	514	Riyadh	22:30	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	JZR	241	Amman	22:40	JZR	786	Riyadh	11:55	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:30
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:15	JZR	185	Dubai	23:10	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00	WAN	337	Alexandria	23:45
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:15								
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:35	ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	23:30								
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	PIA	239	Sialkot	23:40								
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45								

Business

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BEIJING: A decorative plate featuring an image of Chinese President Xi Jinping is seen behind a statue of late communist leader Mao Zedong at a souvenir store next to Tiananmen Square. — AFP

Economists see stability in Xi supremacy

Chinese consider moving assets, or themselves, abroad

BEIJING: As Xi Jinping marches toward presidency for life, economists are lauding the stability of his continued rule but the move has caused some Chinese people to consider moving assets, or themselves, abroad. The Communist Party's move to scrap presidential term limits is the latest indication Xi is returning the country to strongman rule, undermining the consensus of technocrats that has governed China in recent years. But a lengthy period of stability under Xi, whose second term would normally end in 2023, will give him time to push through the much needed reforms he has championed, analysts say.

Xi and his economic team have pledged to tackle China's ballooning debt, move the economy towards sustainable consumption-based

growth and taken aim at corruption endemic in the Communist Party. The "measures are more likely to be successful with a strong and steady leadership", said Robert Carnell, chief economist at ING Bank.

"The ability to get stuff done is something that the weak coalitions that govern, for example, most of Europe, would give their eye-teeth for," Carnell wrote in the note to investors quoted by Bloomberg News. At Davos in January, Xi's top economic advisor Liu He told the crowd of global elites China would get financial risk under control within three years. "This reform agenda would last for decades," economist Raymond Yeung at ANZ Bank wrote in a note to investors, which was largely positive on the raft of proposed constitutional changes.

Concentration of power

Liu, who analysts believe could be in line to become the next central bank chief and also hold the title of vice premier, is in the United States this week dealing with the thorny trade issues rocking relations between the world's two largest economies. A firmer grip on the country for his patron Xi may give him greater leeway to bargain with Donald Trump's administration, analysts say, though others caution it could harden China's positions. The United States and Europe have also complained that Beijing has repeatedly failed to keep its word on opening up its market to foreign firms, which still face many obstacles. History shows one-man rule can hamper effective economic decision-making, though.

The horrors of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revo-

lution and Great Leap Forward are still remembered by many in China. Following the disastrous policies, the Communist leadership sought to prevent further chaos by tempering presidential power through a system in which major personnel and policy decisions were hashed out by the powerful Politburo Standing Committee.

Economist Andrew Polk of Trivium Research said in a newsletter that the changes will strengthen Xi's hand in implementing his policy agenda but invoked Deng Xiaoping to question the long-term wisdom of the moves. "To build the fate of a country on the renown of one or two people is very unhealthy and very dangerous," Polk quoted Deng, the reformist leader who began the opening up of the country in the 1970s. — AFP

Business

Seized Zimbabwe farm is returned, but trouble lingers for rural workers

'It's the only job I had and I had no husband to turn to'

HEADLANDS: When the riot police arrived, Zimbabwean farmworker Mary Mhuriyengwe saw her life fall apart as her job and home disappeared in the ruthless land seizures that defined Robert Mugabe's rule. Mhuriyengwe, 35, watched as police carrying AK-47 rifles released teargas to force white farmer Robert Smart off his land in June 2017 — perhaps the last of 18 years of evictions that helped to trigger the country's economic collapse.

A widow and mother of two, Mhuriyengwe relied on her work as a general laborer at Smart's Lesbury Estates farm in Headlands, 160 kilometers east of the capital Harare. "It's the only job I had and I had no husband to turn to," she said, her voice breaking with emotion. "I found myself with nothing."

To her shock and amazement, Mhuriyengwe is now back at work on the farm and back living in her modest house, after Mugabe was ousted in November and Emmerson Mnangagwa became president. Smart was allowed to return to his farm within weeks of Mnangagwa's inauguration, becoming the first—and so far the only—white farmer to be given back his property. But it is far from certain whether Smart's case will be a precedent enabling other white farmers and their employees to return.

White farmers welcome?

Smart's farm had been at the centre of a power tussle within the ruling ZANU-PF party involving a close ally of Mugabe—whose sudden fall from power saw the property quickly returned to its owner. Mnangagwa himself has described Zimbabwe's land seizures as

"irreversible", and stressed that white farmers would not get their old land back.

Instead, they are being encouraged to take other farms on new 99-year leases as the government seeks to boost the agricultural sector to revive the moribund economy and create jobs. Evicted white farmers may also receive cash compensation—but where the money would come from is unclear. Zimbabwe's often-violent land reform program started in 2000, with thousands of farmers forced off their land by mobs or evicted. Mugabe said the reforms would help black people impoverished by British colonial rule. But critics blame the land redistribution for the collapse in agricultural production that led to Zimbabwe's economy being wrecked by hyper-inflation, mass unemployment and emigration.

Many of the seized farms were given to Mugabe's loyalists or fell into disrepair. Now other white farmers and their employees are waiting to see if Smart's case offers them any hope. "There might be changes in future but as things stand, there is absolutely no change," former cattle rancher Mike Clark told AFP. Ben Gilpin, director of the Commercial Farmers' Union, said he was not aware of any other farmers yet allowed back on their land.

Fled in terror

Whatever the fate of other farms, Mhuriyengwe smiled as she watched a tractor leaving the shed to plant a potato crop. Smart has already recalled 40 of his 300 permanent and casual workers, and has prepared the first five hectares of his 120-

The centre of a power tussle



Zimbabwean commercial farmer Rob Smart inspects irrigation pipes for a potato crop at Lesbury Estates farm in Headlands east of the capital Harare. —AFP

hectare farm for potatoes. "It pained us when Mr Smart was evicted and we were ordered to leave," said Mhuriyengwe who was among families forced to seek shelter in nearby mountains.

Mhuriyengwe's daughters attended school on the farm where Smart also ran a clinic for his workers and families. "Imagine the trauma for the children coming to school from the bush and not knowing whether their parents will still be there after school," teacher Tecla Muyeye said. "For some time, the farm resembled a war zone. The occupiers fired guns to scare away the farmwork-

ers and we did not know how it was going to end."

Workers organized a homecoming party for Smart, breaking into song when he arrived accompanied by security provided by the government. He found the family's house stripped of furniture and much of his farm equipment and supplies stolen. But Smart, who inherited the farm from his father in 1965 and is grooming his son to take over, is determined to be upbeat. "There was a feeling of joy that we were allowed to come back," he said. "It is about the three generations of us and the guys who work here." —AFP

EU stock markets slump

LONDON: European stock markets slid yesterday and Asian counterparts kicked off March with broad losses to extend a global sell-off on US interest rate hike fears. The volatility seen across stock markets during much of February has returned on worries that a strong US economy and President Donald Trump's tax cuts will lead the Federal Reserve to tighten borrowing costs more than previously thought.

The latest bout of selling has come after new Fed boss Jerome Powell presented this week an upbeat assessment for the economic outlook. Powell is due to speak on Capitol Hill again Thursday. "When interest rates look set to rise, stocks tend to fall," City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta told AFP. "A higher interest rate environment is not beneficial for most firms. This is because higher interest rates make it

costlier for companies to borrow money," the expert explained. "Increased costs meant lower profits. It is this fear of higher interest rates dampening company profits which is causing equities to sell off," added Cincotta.

Adding to the unease are the relatively high valuations of stocks, despite recent slides, after a stellar 2017 and January that saw some indices hit record or multi-year highs. "The good news is that March kicks off two of the strongest months historically for equities, before we hit a period of seasonal weakness from May through October," noted Ryan Detrick, senior market strategist at LPL Financial.

On currency markets, the pound continues to struggle against the dollar on worries about faltering Brexit talks. British Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday rejected a draft EU proposal over the tricky Northern Ireland issue, while the bloc's chief negotiator said the pace of trade talks needs to pick up to reach a deal this year.

"Brexit is going to get really ugly or it's not going to happen," said Greg McKenna, chief market strategist at AxiTrader. —AFP

S Africa economic confidence to rise

JOHANNESBURG: Confidence in South Africa's economy will get a boost after Monday's cabinet reshuffle by President Cyril Ramaphosa returned trusted hands to crucial budget-related ministries, a Reuters poll showed yesterday. Seventeen of the 20 economists surveyed in the past three days said Monday's reshuffle would have a significant positive impact on South Africa's economic confidence this year.

One economist said it would be very significant, while the remaining two said it would have an insignificant impact. In that same sample, 18 indicated they were optimistic the country's business sector would play a bigger part in job creation in the next two years. One economist was very optimistic while the remaining one was pessimistic.

"Both business and consumer confidence is likely to be boosted by the election of Cyril Ramaphosa to President of the Republic and the cabinet reshuffle that (followed)," said Jeffrey Schultz, economist at BNP Paribas in Jo-

hannesburg. South Africa's business confidence rose for a third month in a row in January to its highest since late 2015, on expectations the new leadership of the ruling party would stabilise economic policy, a survey showed last month.

"President Ramaphosa clearly has his sights set on improving the domestic business climate and promoting more public-private sector participation," said Schultz. Gross domestic fixed investment — normally capital spending, such as buying new machinery for future production — fell into a recession in 2016, recovering only slightly early last year before hitting another slump in the second quarter.

The private sector makes up nearly two-thirds of the gross domestic fixed investment contribution to GDP, although it has played a smaller role in recent years, with government pushing infrastructure projects to raise jobs. Schultz added that it would take some time for the trust between business and the government to be rebuilt, but it was clear the new government has realized it needs business sector buy-in to get growth and reduce unemployment. Unemployment was at just over 20 percent a decade ago and now more than a quarter of South Africa's labor force is jobless. —Reuters

Business

Behind Benin's cotton harvest and worries over 'monopoly'

The industry is in the hands of a de facto monopoly

BAKOU: The sleepy town of Bohicon in southern-central Benin roars into life during the cotton harvest between January and March. Enormous trucks piled high with "white gold" trundle down the roads to the town's cotton-processing plant. Yerima Fousseni, head of the cotton-growers cooperative in Wewe district farther north, says 2018 has been a bumper harvest—more than 46 tons, triple last year's yield.

"We now have 32 farmers in the village—before, there were only 10 of us. Everyone has been able to see that there's money to be made out of this." That Benin's cotton sector is booming is clear. The country is the fourth biggest producer in Africa, with exports in 2018 set to reach more than 530,000 tons after 451,000 tons in 2017 and 324,000 tons in 2016. Everyone has benefited from the boost but some more than others—and many are wondering why.

Some say the downstream part of the industry is in the hands of a de facto monopoly, dominated by companies historically linked to Benin's president, Patrice Talon. Talon made a fortune in the cotton industry before coming to power in 2016 on a campaign promise to revive it. Once in office, he vowed that he would part with his own interests in the sector. But the degree to which Talon has kept this promise remains unclear, exposing him to accusations of conflict of interest.

Sodeco and ICA, two companies in which he

has historically been the major shareholder, manage or own virtually all of Benin's cotton ginners—factories where, in the first crucial step after harvesting, cotton lint is separated from seed. Companies historically owned or part-owned by Talon are also major players in transporting the raw cotton, handling cotton seeds and in ports where the commodity is exported. How far Talon has since divested, or distanced himself, from these companies remains sketchy. Benin has legislation to punish unfair competition and monopolies, although the ministry of trade has no office to oversee the law.

Accusations of unfair practices



Transparency

The situation has fed accusations of unfair practices in a sector where competition is tough and resentment

can have deep roots. One such critic is Martin Rodriguez, a wealthy Benin entrepreneur who says he lost his entire investment in his home country. In 1997, he says, he built a ginning plant in Nikki, in northeast Benin, but it only operated at less than full capacity. He accuses the state—at the time, Benin's president was Mathieu Kerekou—of starving him of supplies of raw cotton.

Crippled with debt, the factory was sold at auction in November last year at a knockdown price for three billion CFA francs (4.5 million euros, \$5.5 million), and is now being run by Sodeco, says Rodriguez, who has launched a judicial appeal in the case.



BENIN: Boys jump from a transport truck onto a heap of cotton in Bakou in the Wewe District. — AFP

"Talon has taken politics into business and business into politics," said Rodriguez, who now lives in the United States. Abel Gbetoenonmon of a not-for-profit monitoring group called Social Watch Benin said concerns about conflicts of interest mounted after the industry was reorganized after Talon took office. In April 2016, Talon handed management of the cotton industry—a monopoly that until then was part-held by the state—to the Cotton Inter-Profession Association (AIC), gathering cotton producers and spinners, and appointed a long-time associate, Mathieu Adjovi, at its head.

"Abuse of a dominant position became a reality. Before, Patrice Talon controlled 80 percent of the sector, now we are close to 100 percent," Gbetoenonmon charged. Repeated attempts by AFP to solicit a reply from the president's office and the AIC were unsuccessful. Even though the cotton sector in Benin is flourishing, concerns remain about access to the market and accountability. "In the past, when there were problems, small producers or any link in the chain could turn to the state" for help, said one veteran figure in the industry. "Today, who can they speak to?" — AFP

Venezuela presidential hopeful wants Wall St economist on team

CARACAS: Venezuelan presidential candidate Henri Falcon said on Wednesday he would like a Wall Street economist, who sees dollarization as the solution for hyper-inflation in Venezuela, to play a big role on his team if he wins the upcoming election. Falcon said Francisco Rodriguez, a Venezuelan who is chief economist at Torino Capital and advising him informally, would be the ideal leader of his economic team should he defeat socialist President Nicolas Maduro. "What is the cancer of Venezuela, apart from the government? The economy. So the economy is for specialists," he told Reuters during an interview at his new offices in Caracas. "Francisco is a man with many qualifications, but he is also a politician recognized internally and abroad ... We need to build a really good team led by a great economist, that's Francisco Rodriguez."

Dysfunctional economy

Rodriguez, one of the most influential analysts of Venezuela's dysfunctional economy, has recently been suggesting the bolivar currency should be scrapped for the US dollar as an extreme meas-

ure to fix runaway inflation by stopping the government from printing excess money. Rodriguez also believes Venezuela—in the fifth year of crippling recession that has left millions hungry and created widespread shortages—would receive major help from international loan bodies like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund under a new government. Speaking to Reuters earlier on Wednesday on the sidelines of a Caracas forum, Rodriguez confirmed he was giving informal advice to Falcon. "I'm a friend, I respect him," he said. He told the forum Falcon would make an excellent president. "This country cannot survive six more years of Nicolas Maduro, this country doesn't deserve that," he added. Falcon, a former state governor who has broken with an opposition boycott to run against Maduro, said he would prioritize repairing relations with Washington should he win the vote slated for April 22.

While most analysts give him little chance, some recent polls actually put him ahead of Maduro in voter preferences. "The United States would have a potential ally in a new Venezuelan government," said Falcon, who defines himself as a center-leftist in favor of both market-friendly policies and strong welfare protection programs.

New election date sought

Falcon implied he disagreed with possible US oil sanctions against OPEC member Venezuela, saying he opposed any measures that "end up hurting the poor." US President Donald Trump's administration has already slapped some individual sanctions on officials it deems guilty of rights abuses or eroding democracy in Venezuela, and has also imposed measures to block new financing for the government.

It is pondering measures against the oil sector if Maduro does not improve conditions for the election, which critics say has been rigged to legitimize "dictatorship." Falcon, a 56-year-old former military man who supported the ruling socialists until a 2010 split, has drawn the wrath of Venezuela's opposition coalition by throwing his hat into the ring and undercutting their boycott policy.

"Abstention is no use," he said, pointing to past boycotts that had given the socialists big uncontested wins and arguing that 80 percent of Venezuelans wanted change. "In world history, at least for the last two centuries, no government has won an election at a time of hyper-inflation," he added, citing the price of a box of eggs equivalent to nearly two-thirds of the minimum monthly wage.

Prices in Venezuela rose more than 4,000 percent in the 12 months to the end of January, according to estimates by the country's opposition-led National Assembly, broadly in line with independent economists' figures. Falcon is demanding improved election conditions, including a later vote date, UN observers, an end to "harassment" of Maduro opponents, and the removal of government handout booths known as "red spots" to curry favor with voters often set up near polling centers.

Without guarantees, he may withdraw his candidacy. Falcon said he would like veteran Venezuelan politician Eduardo Fernandez, a former presidential candidate for opposition party COPEI, to be his foreign minister. He would not be drawn on specific economic policy ideas, beyond saying he wanted to prioritize tackling inflation and supported a unified currency exchange system instead of the current mix of government and black market rates. — Reuters

Business

Asian markets see in March with another global sell-off

‘February finally cracked the volatility genie out of the bottle’

HONG KONG: Asian markets welcomed in March with broad losses yesterday, extending a global sell-off on US interest rate hike fears, with energy firms hurt by a plunge in oil prices. After a couple of weeks of calm, the volatility that kicked off February has returned on worries that the strong US economy and Donald Trump’s tax cuts will lead the Federal Reserve to tighten borrowing costs more than previously thought.

The latest bout of selling came after new Fed boss Jerome Powell gave an upbeat assessment for the economic outlook as he appeared before lawmakers Tuesday. Similarly, markets went into spasms at the start of last month in reaction to a strong report on US jobs and wages growth. Powell is due to speak on Capitol Hill again Thursday. Adding to the unease are the relatively high valuations of stocks after a stellar 2017 and January, which saw some indexes hit record or multi-year highs.

“February finally cracked the volatility genie out of the bottle, and now the big question is: will he stay out for good?” Ryan Detrick, senior market strategist at LPL Financial, said in a note. “The good news is that March kicks off two of the strongest months historically for equities, before we hit a period of seasonal weakness from May through October.” On Wall Street, the Dow, S&P

500 and Nasdaq all ended sharply lower for a second successive day, and Asia again followed suit.

Tokyo finished 1.6 percent lower, with a stronger yen hitting exporters, while Sydney and Singapore each shed 0.7 percent. Wellington, Taipei, and Kuala Lumpur were also well down. However, Hong Kong recovered initial losses to end up 0.7 percent having lost around two percent in the previous two sessions, while Shanghai also rose 0.4 percent. The markets were given support from a better-than-expected private reading on Chinese factory activity from financial news magazine Caixin, which came day after the official reading showed growth in manufacturing at its slowest pace in 19

months. The latest reading signalled the strongest improvement in operating conditions for six months, Caixin said.

Oil prices sink

Among the biggest losers were petroleum-linked firms, tracking their counterparts in New York, which were hit by data showing a bigger-than-expected rise in US stockpiles. Both main crude contracts have been taking a hit recently as a ramp-up in US shale production offsets the effects of a key OPEC-Russia cap, while gains in the dollar against higher-yielding currencies make the



TOKYO: Pedestrians are reflected in the electronics stock indicator on the window of a security company. — AFP

commodity more expensive. Brent lost more than one percent and WTI more than two percent Wednesday but were mixed in Asia.

Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trading at OANDA, said: “Traders are hypersensitive to crucial inventories data, especially top-side builds, given the market’s refocusing on shale production output as the US remains on course to be the world’s largest oil producer.” On currency markets

the pound continues to struggle against the dollar after falling Wednesday on worries about faltering Brexit talks. British Prime Minister Theresa May rejected a draft EU proposal over the tricky Northern Ireland issue, while the bloc’s chief negotiator said the pace of trade talks needs to pick up to reach a deal this year. “Brexit is going to get really ugly or it’s not going to happen,” said Greg McKenna, chief market strategist at AxiTrader. — AFP

Japan PM scraps key economic policy

TOKYO: Japan’s prime minister was forced into an embarrassing climbdown over a key plank of his economic policy yesterday after data he put forward to support it were discovered to be riddled with errors. A red-faced Shinzo Abe apologized to parliament and “accepted” there were mistakes in statistics used to support the bill, a key part of his “Abenomics” strategy to rekindle Asia’s former economic powerhouse.

He had proposed expanding the so-called “discretionary work system”, under which employees receive benefits for a fixed amount of overtime hours, regardless of how much they actually work. This was part of efforts to reduce Japan’s notoriously long working hours, as well as a bid to boost productivity in the world’s third-largest economy. Opposition lawmakers and unions had criticized the plan, saying employees would not be compensated for additional work beyond the fixed overtime limit.

To support his argument, Abe cited labor ministry data showing working hours for those under the discretionary work system could be shorter than for employees with normal work conditions. However, the opposition spotted dozens of inconsistencies in the data including absurdities like statistics showing overtime of “45 hours per day”, according to Japanese media.

The data scandal has dominated the front pages of Japan’s national papers in recent days with the liberal Asahi daily saying on Thursday that it had resulted in “damage” to the Abe administration. — AFP

Chinese oil baron under investigation

BEIJING: Shares of two firms linked to Chinese conglomerate CEFC China Energy tumbled yesterday after a report that its high-flying chairman was under investigation. Ye Jianming—dubbed China’s “newest oil baron” by Forbes magazine in 2016 quickly built CEFC China Energy into a global energy powerhouse, expanding into Eastern Europe, Africa and the Gulf States, and agreeing to buy 14 percent of Russian oil giant Rosneft last year.

But Chinese financial news magazine Caixin, citing anonymous sources, reported that Ye has been put under investigation over links to a former Communist Party chief accused of graft. The CEFC China Energy conglomerate itself is not publicly listed. But following the report, shares in Shenzhen-listed subsidiary CEFC Anhui International Holding fell by as much as 9.85 percent before closing down 4.45 percent, while affiliate CEFC Hong Kong Financial Investment Company dropped by almost 23 percent on Hong Kong’s Hang Seng.

Both companies distanced themselves from Ye in separate stock filings. “Ye Jianming does not hold any position at (CEFC Anhui), there is no direct relationship with our company, and he is not the company’s actual controller,” the Shenzhen-listed unit of CEFC China Energy said in a stock filing prompted by the Caixin report.

The Hong Kong company said its directors “noted there are press reports today about Mr. Ye Jianming” but stressed that he did not hold any directorship and is not involved in the management of the its operations. The Caixin report did not specify the nature of the investigation into the oil tycoon though it noted “Chinese authorities have requested Ye’s assistance in a graft investigation” of a former provincial Communist Party chief who had been detained on corruption charges.

The party chief had helped CEFC raise money, Caixin reported. Beijing has sought to rein in conglomerates whose splashy overseas investments have taken billions out of the country. Last week, authorities took control of Anbang Insurance Group and said its chairman faced prosecution for “economic crimes”. CEFC’s rapid expansion in China’s state-dominated oil universe and emergence as a major player in world oil markets has raised questions about its backing inside China.

The company has played up its role in Chinese President Xi Jinping’s ambitious One Belt One Road initiative. CEFC China Energy did not respond to an AFP request for comment. Last year, US authorities took the company to task over its business dealings in Africa. US authorities arrested Hong Kong’s former home affairs secretary and the ex-foreign minister of Senegal for leading a multi-million dollar bribery scheme in Africa on behalf of a top Chinese energy company. CEFC was not identified in the announcement or the complaint filed in New York federal district court, but details in the complaint pointed to CEFC China Energy. — AFP

Business

Spotify plans to list shares, fend off Apple and Amazon

Laid out detailed financial data for the first time

SAN FRANCISCO: Music streaming service Spotify on Wednesday filed for a direct listing of its shares, laying out financial data for the first time that cheered some analysts but led others to question how it could turn a profit from its growing subscriber base.

Spotify, which wants to trade as SPOT on the New York Stock Exchange, is taking an unusual path to the US public markets, with a direct listing that will let investors and employees sell shares without the company raising new capital or hiring a Wall Street bank or broker to underwrite the offering. Because the company will not issue any new shares, it did not specify a listing price. Based on private transactions, it is valued at roughly \$19 billion, according to Reuters calculations. Spotify, launched in 2008 and available in more than 60 countries, is the biggest music streaming company in the world and counts services from Apple Inc, Amazon.com Inc and Alphabet Inc's <GOOGL.O> Google as its main rivals.

Rising sales, costs in check

In the filing, Spotify laid out detailed financial data for the first time, showing rising revenue and relatively steady operating costs, which analysts took as a positive. Revenue rose 39 per-

cent to 4.09 billion euros (\$4.99 billion) in 2017, from 2.95 billion euros a year earlier. Its operating loss widened to 378 million euros in 2017 from 349 million euros.

Its net loss ballooned 129 percent in 2017, driven mostly by financing costs related to a 2016 deal in which Sweden-based Spotify raised \$1 billion in debt that would convert to shares upon an initial public offering. "The revenue continues to grow but in particular their costs are growing slower than revenue, which is exactly what you expect in a business like this,"

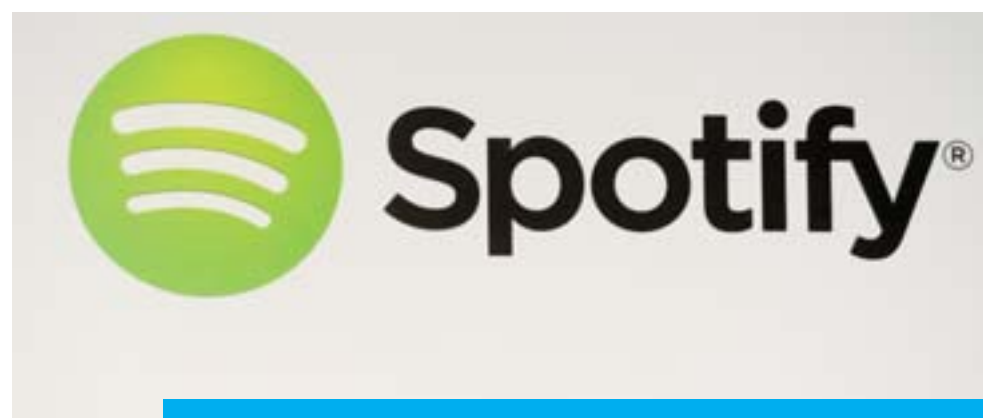
said Jay Ritter, an expert in initial public offerings and professor at the University of Florida.

Spotify compared its aspirations to the reach of Facebook and YouTube. "We believe the universality of music gives us the opportunity to reach many of the over 3.6 billion internet

users globally," it said. With 71 million premium subscribers globally, Spotify has about twice as many paying customers as music streaming runner up Apple, with 36 million. Including those who listen to advertising-supported streams, Spotify has about 159 million monthly average users. Amazon Music Unlimited has 16 million paying subscribers, and Pandora Media Inc has 5.48 million total subscribers.

Google has not said how many subscribers it

has to Google Play, its music streaming service. Spotify's premium subscription costs \$9.99 a month, but it said it saw great potential in its ad-supported service, which Apple does not offer.



NEW YORK: This file photo taken on December 11, 2013 shows a Spotify logo during a press conference. — AFP

"With our ad-supported service, we believe there is a large opportunity to grow users and gain market share from traditional terrestrial radio," Spotify said.

The net proportion of subscribers who left Spotify's paid-for service, or churn, fell to 5.1 percent of paying customers at the end of 2017, from 6.9 percent at the start of 2016, the company said. "This has been a question we've been wondering for a long time: how sustainable is Spotify's model? This is the very first time we're

seeing public disclosure about churn, and the news there is really good," said Larry Miller, head of the music business program at New York University's Steinhardt School.

Spotify calculated that customers brought in 3.6 times more revenue over their life as a user than the company spent on marketing to attract them, as of the end of 2017, helping boost free cash flow to 109 million euros by the end of last year. Still, in going head to head against Apple, Amazon and others, Spotify is "competing against companies that never need to make a dime on music as a standalone business and that in fact use it to drive other aspects of their business," Miller said. — Reuters

Facebook jobs spreading to more countries

NEW YORK: Facebook on Wednesday announced that its year-old job-hunting service is expanding to dozens more countries, aiming to connect members with local work. Facebook vice president Alex Himel described the move into more than 40 countries as a "new stage of the diversification of the social network." Since adding a local jobs posting feature early last year in Canada and the US, Facebook has enhanced it to handle tasks such as managing applications, scheduling interviews, and getting alerts when desired types of positions are listed.

"We do feel really good about how that's worked out in the US, with room for improvement of course," Himel said. Jobs can be listed, or applied for, at a "dashboard" devoted to the purpose in Facebook applications. Use of the basic service is free, but businesses can pay to "boost" posts and more strongly target candidates, according to the Silicon Valley-based

social network. Job posts appear in several locations at the social network, including business pages, Marketplace, and in News Feed.

Speaking with AFP on the sidelines of a presentation in New York, Himel declined to specify how many job postings were listed with Facebook. He said an internal study revealed that one-in-four Facebook members in the US had used the social network to seek jobs.

According to Statistic.com, the Facebook audience in the US tallied about 214 million people, meaning that roughly 53 million people there sought jobs at the social network.

With more than two billion users around the world, Facebook promises strong potential for connecting people seeking work with jobs in need of filling, especially medium- or low-skill jobs in local enterprises. "A lot of these businesses who aren't able to fill their positions elsewhere, they're seeing success on Facebook," Himel said. Facebook's job service wades into the terrain of career-focused social network LinkedIn, which Microsoft bought two years ago in a deal valued at \$26 billion. But LinkedIn is seen as an online venue for professionals to cultivate connections and opportunities whereas Facebook's job service appeared crafted for positions requiring less schooling or specialized training. — AFP

Peugeot Citroen drives to record profits in '17

PARIS: French carmaker PSA Peugeot Citroen said yesterday that its profits raced to new records in 2017 even if its newly-acquired Opel and Vauxhall brands weighed on earnings. PSA Peugeot Citroen notched up "outstanding results, making significant progress for the fourth year in a row," said chief executive Carlos Tavares.

Over the past four years, "the group has turned around," he told the annual earnings news conference. The numbers were "proof of our ability to deliver a profitable and sustainable growth. The acquisition of Opel Vauxhall is a great opportunity to boost value creation." The group's net profit rose by 11.5 percent to a record 1.929 billion euros (\$2.4 billion) in 2017.

Underlying or operating profit was up 23 percent at 3.991 billion euros and sales grew by 20.7

percent to 65.2 billion euros, it said. While the acquisition of Opel boosted revenues, the loss-making German carmaker-acquired last year from General Motors weighed on profitability, as it booked an operating loss of 179 million euros. But CEO Tavares said that he was "very confident with regard to the future. We know we're going to turn (Opel) around," pointing to a 17-percent reduction in costs at the unit achieved already.

Chief finance officer Jean-Baptiste de Chatillon said that the PSA group "achieved record results in 2017, with a record number of vehicle sales at 3.63 million units and a record level of revenues." And the group has also started well into the new year, with the number of new registrations of PSA's Peugeot, Citroen and DS brands jumping 22 percent in February, outpacing overall market growth of four percent, he said.

CEO Tavares said the group was "on track to reach four million unit sales in 2018." He said PSA had increased its market share in Europe to 11.1 percent last year from 10.8 percent in 2016, and it had done so without offering customers discounts. — AFP

Former golf No 1 Lydia Ko struggles in Singapore

Song hits right notes to forge lead

SINGAPORE: Former world number one Lydia Ko laboured to joint 27th place with a one-under 71 after the first round of the HSBC Women's World Championship in Singapore yesterday as the world's top players struggled to find control under Singapore's signature sultry conditions.

Unheralded American Jennifer Song took the lead with a seven-under par 65 at the end of day one with China's world number one Feng Shanshan left five strokes behind on two-under par. American world number two Lexi Thompson never got hot on her way to a three-over 75 as the heavens threatened to open and then caused a more than two-hour break in play with the last three groups still out on the course.

Song twiddled her thumbs in the clubhouse then finished off a day where there were no blotches and seven birdies on the 66th-ranked player's card at the death as she chased her first-ever win on the LPGA Tour. "I'm not really thinking about winning or anything," said Song. "I just want to take it day by day."

"There's a lot of great players out here, so it's a golf course where a lot of players can shoot low numbers. So I just need to keep grinding and do the same thing." Looming with intent was American Michelle Wie, once arguably the most famous female player on the planet after turning pro aged 15

back in 2005 — a move unheard of at the time.

The now 28-year-old shot a first-round five-under 67 to sit tied for second with South Korea's Ji Eun-hee. She took time to reflect on the flood of teenagers now involved in the game at the very top level, including 15-year-old Thai amateur sensation Atthaya Thitikul, who is also competing at the Sentosa Golf Club.

"They are doe-eyed and so full of hope in their eyes, everything is great. I'm like: You. Just. Wait. A couple years," laughed Wie, who came under intense media and public pressure in her early years on Tour.

"But you know, it's great," Wie continued. "It's actually refreshing to see them full of just 'everything is new', and everything is untarnished. It's actually fun to watch that." The last event the American won was the 2014 US Open but there have been plenty of near misses in the years since, including a tied-third at last year's British Open.

A bogey on the last-when she shot a 40-foot birdie putt way wide to the right—took the sheen off an otherwise tidy day at the office and Wie said she had learnt, over the years, how to better live with life's disappointments.

"I think I do a lot less now," she said. "I just chill. I'm just really tired all the time, so I just sleep and I

“ I just want to take it day by day ”

New Springboks coach Erasmus 'best in world'

JOHANNESBURG: Johan "Rassie" Erasmus was hailed as a coach who can transform struggling South Africa after being confirmed as successor to sacked Allister Coetzee by officials in Johannesburg yesterday. The Springboks, traditionally the strongest rivals to top-ranked New Zealand, have slumped to sixth in the world rankings with the 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan on the horizon.

In the last two seasons, the 2015 World Cup semi-finalists won only 11 of 25 Tests under Coetzee and twice conceded 57 points against greatest rivals New Zealand. South Africa face top-ranked New Zealand twice and second-place England four times this season, offering huge challenges for the 45-year-old former Test loose forward.

Erasmus was scheduled to hold a media conference later on Thursday. "Technically, there is not a better coach in South Africa than 'Rassie'," said Springbok legend Victor Matfield. "In fact, he is one of the best in the world." "If Eddie Jones can turn England around in one season, 'Rassie' can do the

same with the Springboks. There is enough time (before the 2019 World Cup) to get them back on track." Former Springboks skipper and loose forward Corne Krige was equally lavish in his praise of the coach who quit as Munster director of rugby late last year and returned home.

"He is an astute coach with an incredible rugby brain who always got positive results wherever he has coached," said Krige. "Erasmus will not be able to solve all the problems of South African rugby, but he might do the Springboks a world of good." Erasmus coached the Free State Cheetahs and Western Province and held several posts with SA Rugby before moving to Ireland two years ago. Columnists have also praised the choice of Erasmus, who steered Munster to the Pro12 final and the European Rugby Champions Cup semi-finals last season. "So highly do SA Rugby rate 'Rassie' that they did not even consider other candidates for the position," wrote Jacques van der Westhuisen in the Johannesburg Star.

"He takes over at a time when things surely cannot get any worse than they already are. So, there is only one way to go... up." Simnikwe Xabanisa of the weekly City Press said: "Erasmus possesses the kind of rugby mind that has never seen the inside of a box." After running eventual champions New Zealand close in the 2015 World Cup semi-final in London, South Africa slumped dramatically when Coetzee was hired. —AFP



SINGAPORE: Lydia Ko of New Zealand tees off during the round one of the HSBC Women's World Championship golf tournament in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

just eat and I just watch a lot of Netflix. I'm really into Riverdale right now. Not too proud of it but it's really good."

This year's Women's World Championship has attracted 19 of the world's top-20 players but any worries that Thitikul might be overawed were blown away when the young Thai—who won last week's Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific championship to qualify for the event—saved her round with four birdies before signing for a two-under 70.

In fact pressure so far seems to have had little effect on the star who last year became the youngest known winner of a professional golf tournament with a two-shot victory at the Ladies European Thailand Championship in Pattaya—aged just 14 years and four months.

Thitikul said after her first round that her pre-event game plan had been to go out there and enjoy herself. "I just want to have fun," she said. "I sing a little bit, a Thai song that's funny and helps me calm down when I have a bogey." —AFP

US Olympic Committee chief steps down amid abuse scandal fallout

DENVER: US Olympic Committee Chief Executive Scott Blackmun is resigning for medical reasons, the organization said on Wednesday, following months of sustained criticism stemming from the sex abuse scandal involving former USA Gymnastics doctor Larry Nassar.

In a statement, the USOC cited Blackmun's "ongoing health issues" related to prostate cancer, for which he has been receiving treatment. As part of the same press release, the group also outlined new reforms aimed at protecting its athletes from abuse.

The Colorado Springs, Colorado-based USOC, which announced the change less than a week after the Winter Olympic Games ended in Pyeongchang, South Korea, had resisted calls to fire Blackmun over the Nassar case. Blackmun, 60, did not attend the Games.

The scandal prompted the entire board of directors at USA Gymnastics, the sport's governing body, to resign, along with the president and athletic director at Michigan

State University, where Nassar also worked. It also spawned lawsuits and criminal and civil investigations.

A number of critics, including athletes who said they were abused and two U.S. senators — Iowa Republican Joni Ernst and New Hampshire Democrat Jeanne Shaheen — had called for the ouster of Blackmun and USOC board members, accusing them of failing to promptly act on complaints raised against Nassar and fostering a culture of silence.

"Scott Blackmun's resignation as CEO of the US Olympic Committee is long overdue," John Manly, a lawyer representing 120 of Nassar's victims, said in a statement. "Under his leadership, USOC has focused nearly all its efforts on money and medals while the safety of our athletes has taken a back seat."

Shaheen also welcomed the resignation, citing Nassar's years of abuse. "It's clear that the culture at the U.S. Olympic Committee desperately needs to change," she said in a statement.

The USOC statement did not address whether the sexual abuse scandal played a role in Blackmun's departure. His compensation in 2016 totaled \$1.075 million, according to USOC tax filings.

"Given Scott's current health situation, we have mutually agreed it is in the best interest of both Scott and the USOC that we identify new leadership," USOC Chairman Larry Probst said in the statement. —Reuters

Sports

Gilmour's OT goal gives Rangers a 6-5 win over host Canucks

Visitors had 3 new players in their lineup following deadline

NEW YORK: John Gilmour's overtime goal gave the Rangers a 6-5 win over the host Vancouver Canucks on Wednesday night as New York ended its losing streak at seven games. Gilmour roofed a shot home for only his second career marker as the Rangers triumphed following a series of deals at and just before Monday's NHL trade deadline. The Rangers jumped out to a 3-0 lead in the first 12 1/2 minutes, but the Canucks responded with three unanswered goals and later overcame 4-3 and 5-4 deficits.

The visitors had three new players in their lineup following the trade deadline, while the Canucks had two. Kevin Hayes led the new-look Rangers with two goals, while Vladislav Namestnikov, acquired in a trade from the Tampa Bay Lightning, recorded a goal and an assist. Jimmy Vesey and Mika Zibanejad also scored for the visitors.

Ryan Spooner, acquired by the Rangers from the Boston Bruins in the Rick Nash trade, earned three assists. Defenseman Neal Pionk also had two helpers for New York. Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist posted 50 saves as the Canucks outshot the Rangers 55-27.

Brock Boeser led the Canucks with two goals, while Daniel Sedin, Bo Horvat and Nikolay Goldobin also tallied for the Canucks. Horvat had two assists and Daniel Sedin had one. Brendan Leipsic, acquired Monday in a trade from Vegas,

contributed two assists. Spooner and Namestnikov impressed early as they assisted on New York's first two goals just 2:05 into the game. After Spooner dumped the puck into Vancouver's zone, Hayes opened the scoring on a weak wraparound at 1:22. Namestnikov drew the second assist as Vesey deflected home a Pionk slap shot 43 seconds later.

Hayes scored his second goal by tipping in a Pionk wrist shot at 12:29. Spooner also assisted on that tally as he fed the puck to Pionk before the shot. With New York on top 3-0, Vancouver starting goaltender Jacob Markstrom was replaced by Anders Nilsson. Markstrom finished with just two saves on five shots. Less than two minutes after the switch, Boeser converted a cross-ice pass from Horvat, reducing Vancouver's deficit to 3-1.

Horvat brought the Canucks within a goal with 48 seconds left in the first period as he put in Daniel Sedin's rebound during a power play. Daniel Sedin created a 3-3 deadlock at 11:01 of the middle frame as he one-timed a pass from Henrik. However, Namestnikov restored the Rangers' lead with a breakaway goal about four minutes later.

Goldobin forged a 4-4 tie on a power play at 12:17 of the third period on a pass from Leipsic. However, a Goldobin giveaway enabled the Rangers to go ahead 5-4 on Zibanejad's goal 2 1/2 minutes later. —Reuters



GLENDALE: Goaltender Jacob Markstrom #25 of the Vancouver Canucks in action during the NHL game. —AFP

World champion Bosse charged for role in car-park brawl

BORDEAUX: France's 800m world champion Pierre-Ambroise Bosse has been charged for his role in an altercation last August during which he was wounded, prosecutors in Bordeaux said yesterday. A man of 24 was charged on September 1 last year for attacking Bosse in a casino car park in Gujan-Mestras, in the southwest of France where the runner has trained since childhood. The injuries ended the athlete's season. The attacker in turn filed a complaint against Bosse, accusing him of provoking the brawl by throwing a beer can, leading to the widening of the investigation.

Bosse was charged on February 26 in Bordeaux for "violence with the use of, or the threatened use of, a weapon that did not cause injuries serious enough to render the victim incapable of work."

The weapon in this case was the beer can, the prosecution indicated on Thursday, confirming a report in the regional daily Sud-Ouest. On August 30, Bosse, who is 25, announced on Facebook that he had been the victim of a "violent aggression" three days earlier, suffering impressive facial injuries. He said he "almost lost an eye" and was going to skip the one event he had left on his schedule, the DecaNation in the French city of Angers. The alleged aggressor did not deny that he punched Bosse in the car park where the runner had been conducting an impromptu autograph and selfie session at 4am.

The accused lodged a complaint saying that the alter-



LONDON: File photo shows France's Pierre-Ambroise Bosse celebrates after his victory in London. Bosse was placed under investigation for violence after a quarrel last summer near Arcachon. —AFP

cation started when the athlete threw a can at his head, which he managed to deflect with his arm-leaving it bruised. Talking recently on French radio, Bosse said the incident occurred on "the first night I was celebrating the medal" won in London on August 8. "These are things that happen at night," Bosse said. "Apparently there are people who take alcohol very badly. I've always found alcohol joyous." Bosse said he could not go into the details because the investigation was continuing but added that he found it "extraordinary to be apparently the aggressor now." —AFP

Wilder eager to prove he is the most dangerous heavyweight

NEW YORK: WBC heavyweight champion Deontay Wilder believes he is the most dangerous man in the division, saying that he could beat anybody at any time ahead of his title defence against Luis Ortiz on Saturday.

Wilder, nicknamed the Bronze Bomber, has won all 39 of his professional fights, with only one of those victories being by a points decision. The 32-year-old has held his heavyweight title since 2015.

The American is raring to take on WBA, IBF and IBO world champion Anthony Joshua, who has said former champion Tyson Fury was his biggest threat. Wilder, however, believes that the 28-year-old Joshua needs to think again.

"Everyone knows that Tyson Fury isn't the biggest threat in the heavyweight division. Everyone knows who is the man in the heavyweight division, hands down," Wilder told Sky Sports. "Everybody knows who has the power to beat anyone at any given time, in the first round or 15 seconds into the 12th round. 'I have that ability to do anything I want. I am the most dangerous man in the division, hands down.'" Promoter Eddie Hearn said in November that talks were underway to arrange a fight between Wilder and Joshua in 2018 but the bout is yet to be confirmed with the Briton taking on WBO champion Joseph Parker on March 31 instead.

Wilder played up his power, saying that opponents he had knocked out in previous bouts had failed to make a successful comeback to the ring. "It's not just that I knock them out, it's the way I knock them out. It's how I knock them out, it's what they do after I knock them out - that's what makes me unique..." Wilder said.

"So if he (Joshua) says that, and he needs to keep that in his mind to feel confident because we know this fight will happen. If that gives him the confidence he needs to try and beat me, he is entitled to his own opinion."

"But I think the fact remains: I am the most dangerous man in the heavyweight division. I can't wait to prove it..." —Reuters

Sports

Australian batsmen kept in check in South Africa

Philander bowled with excellent control to take 2 for 36

DURBAN: David Warner and Steve Smith hit half-centuries but Australia were unable to dominate South Africa's bowling attack on the first day of the first Test at Kingsmead yesterday. Australia, who won the toss and batted on an easy-paced pitch, were 225 for five when bad light ended play four overs before the second new ball was due. With no assistance for the bowlers from a slow surface, South Africa bowled with discipline to keep the batsmen in check.

Apart from a bright third-wicket partnership of 56 off 92 balls between Warner (51) and Smith (56), it was largely attritional cricket between the second and third-ranked teams in Test cricket.

Vernon Philander bowled with excellent control to take two for 36, while left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj took two for 69. It was an indication of the slowness of the pitch that Maharaj bowled 24 of the 76 overs sent down in the day.

Smith made his fifth consecutive score of 50 or more as he continued the form he showed in the Ashes series against England in which he scored 687 runs at an average of 137.40. The Australian captain gave a half-chance on 47 when AB De Villiers at second slip could not hold a sharp, low catch to his left off Philander. He faced 114 balls and hit 11 fours in his innings.

He had made 24 off 44 balls in his partnership

with Warner, who was caught at second slip off the last ball before lunch, but was restricted after the interval as the South African bowlers worked hard to force him to play on the off side instead of his favoured leg side.

Smith showed some signs of frustration before he cut a ball from Maharaj which bounced off wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock's gloves to De Villiers at slip. Maharaj struck again when he switched ends after tea and with his fourth ball of a new spell had Shaun Marsh caught at slip for a patient 40. Marsh had a let-off on 19 when a yorker from Kagiso Rabada struck him low down and would have hit his leg stump, according to television replays. Umpire Kumar Dharmasena gave him not out. South Africa had used up both

of their reviews—also involving leg before wicket decisions by Dharmasena—and could not challenge. South African hopes of pressing home their advantage were foiled by Mitchell Marsh and Tim Paine, who added an unbeaten 48 before the umpires took the players off the field.

The home side claimed two early wickets, having Cameron Bancroft and Usman Khawaja caught behind, but Warner and Smith batted brightly before Philander came back into the attack just prior to lunch and had Warner caught by De Villiers at second slip. Warner faced 79 balls and hit six fours. —AFP



Smith made his fifth consecutive score of 50



DURBAN: South Africa's bowler Morne Morkel (R) delivers a ball to Australia's Steven Smith during day one of the first Sunfoil Test. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

DURBAN, South Africa: Scores at close of play on the first day of the first Test between South Africa and Australia at Kingsmead yesterday:

Australia, first innings		Total (5 wkts, 76 overs)	225
C. Bancroft c De Kock b Philander	5	Fall of wickets: 1-15 (Bancroft), 2-39	
D. Warner c De Villiers b Philander	51	(Khawaja), 3-95 (Warner), 4-151 (Smith), 5-	
U. Khawaja c De Kock b Rabada	14	177 (S. Marsh)	
S. Smith c De Villiers b Maharaj	56	Bowling: Morkel 16-3-48-0, Philander 17-8-	
S. Marsh c De Villiers b Maharaj	40	36-2, Maharaj 24-4-69-2, Rabada 16-4-58-1,	
M. Marsh not out	32	Markram 1-0-2-0, De Bruyn 2-0-6-0.	
T. Paine not out	21	To bat: P. Cummins, M. Starc, N. Lyon,	
Extras (b4, lb2)	6	J. Hazlewood.	

Dutch set sights on cricket World Cup

THE HAGUE: On a fine summer's day more than a century ago, a local and British sports team bowled what is widely believed to be one of the first-ever "international" overs in a cricket game in the Netherlands.

Today, 136 years after the Dutch team lost by an innings and 56 runs against Uxbridge Cricket Club, the men in orange are setting their sights on competing in cricket's ultimate tournament—next year's World Cup in England.

The plucky Dutch are in Zimbabwe for the World Cup qualifying event starting Sunday—which will give two teams who did not automatically make it like cricket giants Australia, India and South Africa, the chance to compete in the 2019 showpiece.

"There is a lot on the line in the short-term," admitted Dutch coach Ryan Campbell, a former Australian national player who took over the reins of the Dutch national squad in April last year. Observers in the Netherlands agree, saying that under Campbell's careful eye, working with

the Royal Dutch Cricket Federation's (KNCB) high performance manager Roland Lefebvre, the national team has made impressive strides in less than a year.

'UNDER PRESSURE'

But the game of leather on willow has always seen its ebbs and flows in the low-lying Netherlands and the country's cricketing highs—although the stuff of legends—can be counted on one hand. And while Dutch cricket is again hoping to rise in the international arena, there are worrying signs for the sport at home. "I won't deny that cricket is under pressure in the Netherlands," said top KNCB official Alex de la Mar.

"This is perhaps mainly because we have to compete more-and-more with football," he told AFP. Many cricket clubs share their fields with their football counterparts and recent measures have seen soccer being extended into summer, eating up much of the already desperately short cricket season. In the football-mad Netherlands youngsters who show talent in both sports "are often forced to make a choice at a very young age as sports are not played in schools but at clubs," said former Dutch national player and international cricket coach Tim de Leede. "Unfortunately many of them choose football," said De Leede, regarded as one of the country's greatest all-rounders and the Netherlands' top World Cup wicket taker. —AFP

Stokes savours return after off-field issues

HAMILTON: England all-rounder Ben Stokes felt very emotional yet satisfied after his brilliance helped secure a one-day international series-levelling victory against New Zealand on Wednesday in his second game back since being charged with affray.

Last September's incident in Bristol and the legal process that followed kept the 26-year-old out of England's unsuccessful Ashes tour of Australia. Stokes pled not guilty at a court appearance last month and made his long-awaited comeback at Hamilton on Sunday, scoring 12 and claiming a couple of wickets as New Zealand won the first of five one-dayers by three wickets.

"It was very satisfying for me. I was quite emotional walking off there at the end," Stokes said after his key contributions to England's six-wicket win at Mount Maunganui. "Even walking on the field the first time and walking off tonight made me understand how much of

a privilege it is to represent your country. It was a different feeling to what it is normally but it was a great feeling to be walking off there."

Stokes claimed 2-42 before returning to hit 63 not out to help England level the series ahead of Saturday's third ODI in Wellington. "I've been working hard at home making sure that when the opportunity came again to represent England I wasn't going to let anyone down," he added.

"Obviously it's been a long time. Hopefully now this is a stepping stone on the road to trying to keep on helping England win games. "We've got a massive summer ahead and the World Cup coming up after that as well, so hopefully this is just the start of it.

"It was obviously frustrating to watch the Ashes. I went through all the emotions as I would have done playing but there's not a lot I can change about that now. "It's what's coming up now going forward. As a cricketer, especially as an England cricketer, we've got so much cricket to play and there's lots to look forward to and concentrate on going forward." Stokes' explosive batting, tidy bowling and superb fielding prompted Rajasthan Royals to sign him for \$1.97 million for this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 tournament beginning on April 4. —AFP

Sports

Who will be crowned the 2018 Kuwait King of Drift?

With just a week remaining until the Red Bull Car Park Drift Qualifier, Kuwait is gearing up to find out who will be crowned the 2018 National King of Drift.

Only a couple of months since welcoming elite drifters competing for the 2017 King of Drift thrown at the Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final, Kuwait is, once again, ready to rev-up its engines for the local qualifier of the 2018 series on March 9 at Sirbb Circuit.

Twenty-five drifters will go head to head to impress the reputable judges and clinch the crown of the Kuwait 2018 King of Drift. Having had hosted a successful adrenaline-filled Series Final on December 8, Kuwait is, no doubt, in the position to impress thousands of drifting and motorsport fans alike.

Red Bull Car Park Drift is organized by Basel Salem AlSabah Motor Racing Club and is sponsored by Total, Falken Tyres, Drag 965, and Acqua Eva. Media partner, Kuwait Times, will cover this popular event.

In order to be crowned the 2018 King of Drift, the drifters will have to score the highest on a variety of criteria. Aiming to elevate the competition year after year, Abdo Feghali, the Guinness World Book Record holder for the longest drift, has modified the criteria to challenge the drifters. This year their performance will be determined based on Car Look & Design (10%), Tire Smoke (10%), Car Sound (7%), Section 1 Drifting (15%), Section 2 Drifting (15%), Boxes (15%), Gates (15%), and Pendulum (13%).

This challenging competition leaves no room for error, as participants will lose points if they hit obstacles, drift the wrong way, or spin their car. In case of three penalties, the drifter will be disqualified.

Kuwait's drifter will face a fierce challenge for the King of Drift title, competing against drifters from eleven other countries that have participated in the series. The 2018 series kicked off in Oman on January 26 and the competition has continued since then with qualifiers in UAE, Egypt, and Qatar. Qualifiers will continue in Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan, Mauritius, and Lebanon.

In front of 4,000 spectators, Rifaat Al Yahyai from Oman managed to clinch the 2017 Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final title in a spectacular manner. Second place went to Othman Al Takriti from Jordan, followed by Ahmad Hamada from Egypt who rounded the podium.

To find out more follow Red Bull on Instagram and Twitter @redbullkuwait and on Facebook @redbull



Abdo Feghali cheers up the crowd during the Red Bull Car Park Drift National Final at Sirbb circuit in Kuwait City, Kuwait on May 5th, 2017.



A competitor performs during Red Bull Car Park Drift National Final at Sirbb circuit in Kuwait City, Kuwait on May 5th, 2017.



Winners celebrate with their trophies at the Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final 2017 at Sirbb Circuit in Kuwait City, Kuwait on December 8th, 2017.

Sports

Harden scores 17 points as Rockets down Clippers for 14th straight win

Paul George scores 23 points and seven assists for Thunder

LOS ANGELES: James Harden scored 17 first-quarter points Wednesday night as the Houston Rockets pushed a winning streak to 14 games for the second time this season, beating the host Los Angeles Clippers 105-92. Harden's game-high 25 points made him one of three Houston players to tally 20 or more. Clint Capela and sixth man Eric Gordon each added 22 as the Rockets upped their NBA-best record to 48-13, a half-game ahead of the Golden State Warriors. Tobias Harris tallied 24 points and Montrezl Harrell added 22 for the Clippers, who lost for just the fourth time in 11 games since trading Blake Griffin to the Detroit Pistons.



THUNDER 111, MAVERICKS 110 (OT)

Russell Westbrook scored 30 points and converted a go-ahead three-point play late in overtime, leading visiting Oklahoma City past Dallas. Paul George scored 23 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and Westbrook added 11 rebounds and seven assists for the Thunder, who have won three of four since the All-Star break. Dennis Smith Jr. missed a shot on the Mavericks' final possession of overtime. Harrison Barnes led Dallas with 26 points. Mavericks veteran Dirk Nowitzki scored 12 points and became the sixth player in NBA his-

tory to reach 31,000 career points. He reached the milestone with one of his trademark step-back jumpers in the second quarter.

PELICANS 121, SPURS 116

Anthony Davis scored 26 points and grabbed 15 rebounds, and Jrue Holiday added 25 points as New Orleans came from 15 points down to beat host San Antonio. San Antonio forward LaMarcus Aldridge's double-digit scoring streak of 59 games came to an end when he scored just eight points and sustained a right ankle sprain that kept him out of the second half. Spurs coach Gregg Popovich quickly joined his star forward in the locker room when he was ejected from the game for arguing with the officials just 47 seconds into the third quarter.

Pelicans rally to beat Spurs

WARRIORS 109, WIZARDS 101

Golden State worked its third-quarter magic again, pulling away from host Washington in the second half. Playing for the 11th time as a visitor in his hometown, Kevin Durant scored nine of his game-high 32 points in the third period, during which the Warriors extended a 58-56 halftime lead to 85-70. The Warriors entered the game



LOS ANGELES: Sindarius Thornwell #0 of the LA Clippers goes to the basket against the Houston Rockets on Wednesday at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

leading the NBA in third-quarter scoring average (30.9) and third-quarter field-goal percentage (.529). They have now outscored their opponents by a total of 1,362 points in the third period this season.

CELTICS 134, HORNETS 106

Kyrie Irving continued his dominance with a game-high 34 points as Boston won its fourth straight game out of the All-Star break, beating

visiting Charlotte. Irving is averaging 27 points since the break and has scored 25 or more in three consecutive games. Six of Irving's teammates also scored in double digits as Boston stayed within a half-game of Eastern Conference-leading Toronto. Kemba Walker had 23 points and Dwight Howard added 21 for Charlotte, which had its season-high five-game winning streak snapped and was swept in its three-game season series with Boston. — Reuters

VAR gets frosty reception after 'shambolic' cup clash

LONDON: As the snow obscured the Wembley grass and confusion reigned on and off the pitch during Tottenham Hotspur's FA Cup replay against Rochdale on Wednesday the words of former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly sprang to mind.

It was the tough-talking Scot who once said "football is a simple game, complicated by idiots." Fair to say had he been at the national stadium he might have turned the air blue with his pronouncements on the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system.

It should have been a night for underdogs Rochdale to enjoy their moment to shine, or for Tottenham's Spanish striker Fernando Llorente to savour scoring a hat-trick in a 6-1 win. Instead, the talk was of how VAR, which could be rolled out at the World Cup this year, left players, managers and fans cold.

Tottenham left back Danny Rose called



LONDON: Referee Paul Tierney waits for a VAR decision during the English FA Cup 5th round replay football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Rochdale at Wembley Stadium in London, on Wednesday. — AFP

the tie "shambolic". Former England full back Stuart Pearce, speaking on Sky Sports, said VAR does not work for football. "There are so many grey areas in our game. Let the guy in the middle make the decision and respect that decision."

Ex-England striker Alan Shearer said on Twitter: "... VAR you were hopeless again." The video assistant was called into action at Wembley after seven minutes when Tottenham had a routine Erik Lamela

goal disallowed when an official watching on the video screen flagged up to match referee Paul Tierney a tiny shirt-pull by Llorente. In the 22nd minute Tottenham's Lucas Moura was denied a penalty after Tierney, finger in ear, again consulted VAR. When Son Heung-min did fire Tottenham ahead a BBC Radio Five commentator said: "There can be no argument about that one." Yet Tierney still went to the VAR to confirm the goal's legality. — Reuters

Saudi-Iran spat should keep out of football, says FIFA boss

TEHRAN: FIFA president Gianni Infantino said yesterday that a two-year diplomatic rift between Saudi Arabia and Iran should not be allowed to get in the way of football.

Saudi clubs have refused to play in Iran since the kingdom broke off relations in January 2016 forcing AFC Champions League fixtures with Iranian clubs to be played in neutral Oman. "It's very clear that politics should stay out of football and football should stay out of politics," Infantino said at a joint news conference in Tehran with Iranian Sport Minister Massoud Soltanifar. "There are of course political issues between countries all over the world but this should not have an impact on the football tournament. 'The solution is always just to play home and away like in every competition in every country.'"

The FIFA chief acknowledged that Saudi Arabia had voiced security concerns after protesters angry at its execution of a top Shiite cleric attacked its embassy and a consulate in Iran, prompting it to cut ties. "Obviously the guarantees must be there, the safety must be there," he said. — AFP

Superstar Neymar arrives in Brazil for foot surgery

Surgery will take place tomorrow

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazilian superstar Neymar flew into Rio de Janeiro early yesterday ahead of an operation on his fractured foot that will rule him out for up to three months, casting a long shadow over Paris Saint-Germain and Brazil's World Cup preparations.

The world's most expensive player, 26, arrived on an Air France flight from Paris and left in a wheelchair, a photo taken by one of his fellow passengers showed. Dressed in a black hoodie, a black baseball cap and wearing sunglasses, the PSG star smiled and took selfies with passengers, before leaving on a private jet to an undisclosed destination. Surgery will take place Saturday, national team surgeon Rodrigo Lasmar said. But despite the hurry to put Neymar under the knife at a hospital in Belo Horizonte, he won't be back on the field soon.

"The (recovery) period will be around two and a half to three months," Lasmar, said after arriving with the player on the same Air France plane. The injury has not only ruled Neymar out of PSG's do-or-die Champions League clash

with Real Madrid but now threatens the much fancied Brazilian national side's build-up to the World Cup, which starts June 14.

On Tuesday, the Brazilian's father had claimed the player would be out for "at least six weeks".

Tiny bone, big problem

Neymar suffered a hairline fracture of the fifth metatarsal in his right foot as well as a twisted ankle late in PSG's 3-0 win over Marseille in Ligue 1 on Sunday.

Speaking to ESPN in Brazil before PSG's announcement, the player's father, Neymar Senior, said: "PSG know that they will not be able to count on Neymar for the upcoming matches."

PSG coach Unai Emery had said earlier that there remained a "small chance" of getting him back in time to face Real next Tuesday, March 6. That chance has now gone.

PSG lost 3-1 in the first leg in Spain two weeks ago and are in danger of being knocked out of the competition in the last 16 for the second season running. Neymar appeared to be in

“Recovery period will be around two and a half to three months”



PARIS: File photo taken on February 25, 2018 Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar Jr reacts lying on the pitch during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Marseille (OM) at the Parc des Princes in Paris. — AFP

tears as he was stretchered off the field at the Parc des Princes on Sunday.

He has scored 28 goals in 30 appearances in all competitions for PSG since his world-record 222 million-euro (\$264 million) move from Barcelona last August.

Brazilian jitters

Brazilians care little about the impact on PSG.

Their attention is entirely trained on the World Cup, where they have ambitions of walking away with a sixth title. "We just might have lost the World Cup last Sunday," one radio commentator, Milton Neves of Bandnews FM, said Wednesday. Images of Sunday's fateful duel between Neymar and Marseille player Bouna Sarr were being shown incessantly on TV, often in slo-mo, before he was stretchered off. — AFP

Juventus face Milan for fourth Italian Cup title in row

TURIN: Holders Juventus booked their ticket to the Italian Cup final for the fourth year in a row to set up a meeting with AC Milan after a 1-0 win over Atalanta in a semi-final second leg tie played in the snow in Turin on Wednesday.

The first leg ended 1-0 in Bergamo thanks to an early Gonzalo Higuain goal, and Juventus also won the second when Miralem Pjanic slotted in a 75th-minute penalty awarded after Blaise Matuidi was fouled in the box. The three-time holders will play AC Milan who battled past Lazio 5-4 on penalties in the Stadio Olimpico after their semi-final remained goalless after extra time.

Nikola Kalinic almost scored the winner after 117 minutes but sent the ball over the bar when alone in front of goal, sending the game to penalties. AC Milan could thank the saves of teenage goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma for a spot in the final in Rome on May 9 with centre-back Alessio Romagnoli scoring the winning penalty.

"It was a night of suffering. This is a very young team, we must get them back to being the team that made the fans dream," said Milan



ROME: AC Milan's midfielder from Italy Giacomo Bonaventura (L) is challenged by Lazio's Brazilian defender Luis Felipe as he kicks the ball during the Italian Tim Cup semi-final football match between Lazio and Milan. — AFP

coach Gennaro Gattuso. The win extends Gattuso's unbeaten streak with AC Milan to 13 games, with six straight wins.

But the former AC Milan midfielder insisted there was too much talk about him and how he has turned around the team. "I'm not a tactical guru. I'm just a lucky guy." Five-time winners

Milan last won the Cup in 2003, with their last final in 2016. Earlier Juventus took on Atalanta, whose Serie A game Sunday was snowed off, with light snowfall still in the Allianz Stadium. "Compliments to the lads for what they did tonight and are doing this season," said coach Massimiliano Allegri.

'NOT AN OBSESSION'

It will be a record 18th final for Juventus with Allegri's side bidding for a 13th Cup in total. "We will play in a historical stadium, but it must not become an obsession," continued the Juventus coach of their bid for a record fourth Cup crown.

"In the first half we had difficulty closing them down, after the break Douglas Costa started playing in a centre-forward role and that broke the game open." Higuain missed out as he recovers from a sprained ankle. Atalanta had come out firing with Alejandro Gomez sending over the bar with Gianluigi Buffon tested as he latched on to Josip Ilicic's deflected cross pushing over the top. Gomez thought he had scored the equaliser for Atalanta after the break with Buffon off the line, lobbing the Juventus captain, only for the ball to bounce off the outside of the post. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
Borussia Monchengladbach v Werder Bremen	22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5	
FRENCH LEAGUE	
OGC Nice v LOSC Lille	21:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Monaco v Girondins de Bordeaux	22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 6	



SINGAPORE: Lydia Ko of New Zealand watches her shot during the round one of the HSBC Women's World Championship golf tournament in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

Former golf No 1 Lydia Ko struggles in Singapore